



MOVIES

SUPERMAN

soars into new territory by unearthing the hero's true essence

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

James Gunn's long-awaited reboot of *Superman* serves as not only a reinvention of the Man of Steel but also a reinvention of how superhero stories are told on the big screen. While it is not a perfect movie, it is, however, a perfect representation of the hope and optimism that the character has come to represent.

The story revolves around Superman after he deals with the aftermath of stopping a war between the nations of Boravia and Jarhanpur, while his archenemy Lex Luthor, conspires behind the scenes.

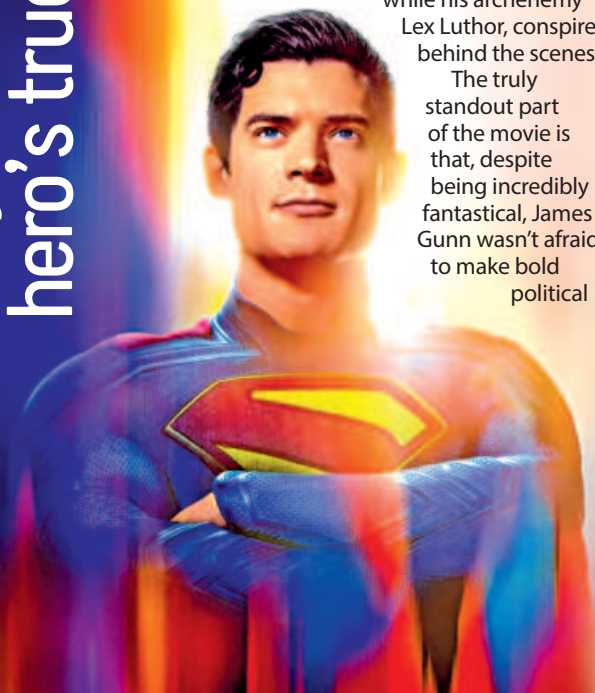
The truly standout part of the movie is that, despite being incredibly fantastical, James Gunn wasn't afraid to make bold political

statements. The conflict between the fictional countries, Boravia and Jarhanpur, is an obvious commentary on the Israeli occupation of Palestine. To witness what is essentially a very pro-Palestinian message take such centre stage in a Hollywood superhero blockbuster is nothing short of revolutionary.

David Corenswet gives an outstanding performance in portraying the duality of Superman and Clark Kent. This Superman works to change the status quo of the world and deeply cares about the sanctity of life. Rachel Brosnahan's Lois Lane also works as a great contrast to Clark, and that's what makes their growing romance incredibly compelling. Besides the titular hero, Nicholas Hoult provides the best performance in the movie as Lex Luthor, who is a villain driven solely by pure hatred.

There are, however, some issues with the film – the most prominent being the pacing. With the movie set in a world already populated with heroes, it doesn't spend enough time on world-building and exposition. The movie would have greatly benefited from a slightly longer runtime; the lack of which specifically takes away from some of the emotional moments. A lot of the humour also does not land, and there are a few strange story choices and lore changes.

Superman conveys a message about kindness, hope, and how our choices represent who we are. It dares to tread on themes no other superhero movie comes close to, and tethers the character to his roots as a "Champion of the oppressed".



OPPORTUNITIES

Leeds Beckett University

Leeds Law School International Scholarship

ELIGIBILITY

Students must be enrolled in an eligible course and meet other eligibility criteria.



Scholarships are offered automatically if you meet the eligibility criteria.

DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED

Visit leedsbeckett.ac.uk/international-students/scholarships to learn more

Cardiff University

Vice-Chancellor's International Scholarship (Postgraduate)

ELIGIBILITY

The scholarship is worth GBP 10,000 in the form of tuition fee reduction.



Applicant must pay any required deposit by the date specified on their offer letter.

No separate application for the scholarship is required.

DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED

Visit cardiff.ac.uk/study/postgraduate to learn more



University of Surrey

International Excellence Award

ELIGIBILITY

The scholarship is worth GBP 5,000 in the form of a tuition fee reduction.

The scholarship is merit-based and its recipients are decided by the scholarship awards panel.

DEADLINE: JULY 31, 2025

Visit surrey.ac.uk/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries to learn more

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ISD scholarship unlocks access to international education

Despite growing aspirations among several talented Bangladeshi students to pursue international education, many still find it beyond their reach for financial reasons.

Higher tuition fees, additional costs, and the lack of availability of scholarships make it difficult for many students to access an international standard education.

International School Dhaka (ISD) wants to change this narrative. ISD is offering a breakthrough scholarship programme to meritorious candidates, allowing them to become a part of this excellent school and study in the world-class International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum.

The scholarship gives students from the age of 11 to 17 a full waiver on admissions and up to a 90 percent discount on their school fees, based on their academic records. Students from any curriculum can apply and be considered for a scholarship based on their academic ability, leadership potential, and commitment to co-curricular activities.

As the world becomes more interconnected than ever, it is imperative that young people have a global mindset to succeed in multicultural settings, both in their academic and professional lives. Being a global citizen means going well beyond the confines of a classroom, and that is exactly where the ISD stands out.

A thriving multicultural community, ISD classrooms buzz with diversity as children of different nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds sit and learn together in an environment and under a curriculum that promotes empathy, open-mindedness and a truly global perspective.

Unlike traditional curricula, the International



Baccalaureate (IB) is more than just about knowledge acquisition. It encourages inquiry, problem-solving and the use of different strategies to overcome challenges, preparing students to be future leaders and lifelong learners.

The IB programme offers a holistic and academically rigorous curriculum that leads students to succeed in university education and life beyond school.

Apart from that, for students interested in pursuing higher education abroad, IB has a utilitarian advantage. The majority of universities recognise IB course credits as equivalent to first-year requirements, thereby enabling the students to accelerate their academic pursuit.

The ISD scholarship programme is not just about offering financial support; it also opens up a whole new world of possibilities to meritorious and dedicated students.

The school consists of students and teachers of over 30 nationalities, fostering cross-cultural understanding. Through the partnership of ISD and leading US college Carnegie Mellon University, students can enhance their

technological capability through coding, robotics, and computational thinking using LEGO and VEX kits.

The ISD scholarship provides world-class facilities for many talented students to improve physical and sports development as well. Collaborating with the Barcelona Academy, ISD offers FC Barcelona's football methodology to students in the age group of 6 to 18 years.

ISD also offers the IB Bilingual Diploma, in which students are able to study literature in Bangla and other languages such as Mandarin, Korean, or French, developing their cultural empathy.

Take the example of Shaira Samiha, a scholarship awardee who received an ISD scholarship and successfully turned her passion for music into an enriching part of her school life.

Shaira was studying the GCSE curriculum of Cambridge at Chittagong Grammar School, and after hearing about the ISD scholarship from her brother's friend, who was also awarded a scholarship, she applied for the scholarship.

"I have always loved singing, but since arriving at ISD, I discovered the piano, and now, I am completely captivated. And the wonderful thing is, I have been able to perform, which feels amazing," said Shaira.

Although it can become a bit stressful for students at times with all the exams and deadlines looming, it allows students to develop qualities like resilience, time management and decision-making under pressure, shaping individuals as future leaders.

Commenting on that, Shaira said, "Sometimes it gets challenging, with all the tests and deadlines happening

at the same time. But on the other hand, it's a good thing. It makes you a lot more capable of taking on things. For me, it's definitely the freedom and the way of learning. ISD education is not just books and tests. After coming here, I have learned to do independent research, which is a better way of learning. I have learned to be more open-minded, and there's freedom to express your thoughts. Also, ISD offers a variety of other things alongside education, like five different sports teams, music, community service, international competitions, and more."

These students have also demonstrated unmatched university placement rates and received remarkable scholarship offers from globally well-known universities. This year, ISD alumni received more than USD 3 million in degree scholarships to US, UK, Canadian, and Australian universities.

ISD has committed to providing opportunities to students of high potential, such as Shaira, both academically and as a leader.

For high-achieving, curious and motivated students, ISD's scholarship is a life-changing opportunity. It's a chance to be part of a school that nurtures the whole person, empowers leadership and unlocks a global future.

Applications for the scholarship programme are open. Students from all backgrounds and across Bangladesh are invited to apply and take the first step towards a future of excellence, growth and global opportunity.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.isdbd.org/scholarship-program/>



WITH MORE CAPACITY, WE ARE MORE READY TO BUILD TOMORROW'S BANGLADESH



EDUCATION

Does the Computer Science curriculum in Bangladesh need a reset?

With the field evolving at an unprecedented rate, universities and students have been left to wonder how they can adapt as industries diverge into increasingly specialised routes.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

BIPRA PRASUN DAS

Picture this: You've just wrapped up your Computer Science (CS) degree from a top university in Bangladesh. You've got the grades, a solid CGPA, and have learnt everything taught in class by heart. But then, you start scrolling through job listings, and it feels like you've landed on another planet.

Even entry-level positions – be it software engineers or artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) roles – often sound like they expect skills you barely touched in class. Suddenly, you're left wondering: Did my four years in university actually prepare me for the real world? Or is there something seriously off with the CS curriculum we're being taught under?

Understanding the problem at hand

The CS degree has long been the standard pathway for tech aspirants in Bangladesh. Yet with the field branching into subcategories like AI, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Fintech, Digital Health, etc., can a single, broad undergraduate programme still meet the needs of students and industry?

In this ever-expanding universe of subfields, a single, generalised undergraduate degree can begin to feel like a jack-of-all-trades programme that risks giving students only superficial exposure to areas they may later wish to master.

So, should our universities fragment the broad Computer Science degrees into narrowly defined and highly specialised degree tracks? To figure that out, we have to take into consideration Bangladesh's academic ecosystem, our students' readiness for early specialisation, and the practical constraints our universities face.

Could specialised tracks be the solution?

Specialised degree tracks offer many benefits to both academic and professional lives. By concentrating on a specific domain, like Data Science or Software Engineering,

students gain in-depth knowledge of the theories, tools, and practices that define their field. Graduates emerge with expertise that often takes years to acquire through on-the-job experience, boosting their confidence and signaling to employers their immediate value.

From an academic standpoint, focused tracks foster the creation of dedicated research labs and industry collaborations, giving students access to cutting-edge projects and real-world datasets.

Farnaz Fawad, a Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) graduate from BRAC University, currently working at a private company, remembers feeling constrained by a curriculum that treated Computer Science as a monolith, despite the field's immense internal diversity.

"In my opinion, the current CS curriculum in most universities feels quite outdated," says Farnaz. "While it's important to learn the fundamentals, the way it is structured doesn't really allow students to explore the different branches within Computer Science."

Farnaz also pointed out the difficulties this causes when students step into their professional lives, "When you enter the job market in Bangladesh, you often have to learn entirely new tools, technologies, or even legacy systems. In some cases, it is highly likely that these weren't covered or even discussed during your academics."

Mehidy, a CSE graduate from National University, currently working as a software security engineer at a private bank, expressed similar views, "My CSE degree gave me a broad foundation across many areas of computing. That breadth actually helped me discover my passion for Cybersecurity, which wasn't something I was initially aware of. I had the freedom to explore different domains before choosing what truly excited me."

"However, once I found that interest, I realised how little depth my formal education offered in the field," continues Mehidy. "To pursue a career in Cybersecurity, I had to seek out a lot of external resources such as online

courses, certifications, and training programmes to build the practical skills and domain knowledge the industry demands. If our academic structure allowed for more focused specialisations within the CS or CSE curriculum, like offering tracks in Cybersecurity or AI, it would empower students to go deeper once they have identified their interest, without having to start from scratch after graduation."

The case against specialised CS tracks in Bangladesh

Not everyone, however, agrees with the concept of early specialisation in the CS field. Polash, who graduated from North South University (NSU) and is now working at a German IT firm as a data analyst, thinks that a CS or CSE degree, despite some shortcomings, is the best way forward.

"Having completed a CSE degree, I can confidently say it was instrumental in helping me discover where my true interests lie. Without that solid foundation – covering everything from algorithms and data structures to networking and databases – it's very difficult to pinpoint your calling," says Polash.

Polash adds, "In Bangladesh, many students complete their higher secondary (high school) education with only a cursory exposure to computing, and they simply aren't ready to dive straight into specialised topics. A broad undergraduate programme gives them the time and context they need to explore, learn, and choose the path that suits them best."

Universities in countries like the US, UK and Australia have already started offering specialised degrees within the CS field at the undergraduate level. However, that might not yield desired results in the context of Bangladesh.

Prof. Tanzima Hashem, Head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), cautions against simply importing the specialisation models from countries

where well-defined subfields are backed by robust research ecosystems, extensive industry linkages, and mature job markets.

"In countries like the US, UK, and Australia, specialised roles in AI, data science, or Cybersecurity are well-defined, supported by mature job markets, well-funded research ecosystems, and strong academia–industry linkages," says Prof. Hashem. "In Bangladesh, however, the tech ecosystem is still developing, and the demand is more for adaptable engineers who have a solid foundation and can be upskilled as needed. It may also reduce their ability to pivot into cross-disciplinary fields like fintech, digital health, or computational agriculture – areas that are slowly emerging in Bangladesh and often require foundational breadth rather than narrow technical specialisation."

Industry demands are not the only factor here. Student preparedness is also something that has to be taken into account when we are talking about restructuring the CS curriculum. A major risk of requiring students to choose specialised tracks too early is that many lack the background and counseling to make those decisions wisely.

"Most students in Bangladesh enter university without sufficient early exposure to computing or access to high school-level career counseling," Prof. Hashem notes. "Requiring them to commit to a specialised track too early – often in their first or second year – may result in choices based on incomplete understanding or social pressure rather than informed interest. This can lead to long-term mismatches between their academic training and career strengths."

Besides, many universities in Bangladesh face a shortage of expert faculty in emerging domains – a problem that is compounded by limited funding and logistical barriers.

"Introducing specialised undergraduate programmes in fields like AI, Cybersecurity, or Data Science presents several other challenges for universities in Bangladesh," shares Prof. Hashem. "A major concern is the shortage of expert faculty in these emerging areas, which makes it difficult to ensure high-quality education. Infrastructure is another significant constraint. Specialised programmes

require high-performance computing facilities, advanced laboratories, and access to large-scale datasets to support hands-on learning. Many Bangladeshi universities, however, struggle to provide these essentials due to funding and logistical limitations."

The need for finding the right balance in our CS curriculum

According to Prof. Hashem, a more balanced and layered approach is the ideal way forward for Bangladesh, for now. "A broad CS or CSE degree that offers domain-focused electives, capstone projects, and internships in the later years can strike the right balance, allowing students to build deep expertise without sacrificing the flexibility needed in a still-evolving context. The CSE department at BUET is already moving in this direction. In the fourth year of the undergraduate programme, students can choose optional courses and pursue thesis work in areas such as AI, Software Engineering, or Cybersecurity. At the postgraduate level, the department has introduced advanced degree programmes in five key areas – Cybersecurity, Data Science, Software Engineering, Computing, and Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning – alongside the regular CSE track."

Fragmenting the CSE curriculum into specialised degrees poses many challenges that stem from issues in our education system, academia–industry gaps, and Bangladesh's overall tech ecosystem, which is still in its infancy. Addressing these issues could be the first steps towards paving the way for more specialised undergraduate degrees in the field of Computer Science in Bangladesh.

As Bangladesh charts its own path in tech education, it must weigh the allure of early specialisation against the proven benefits of a broad foundation. A good way forward, for now, could be finding a middle ground as noted by Prof. Hashem. In the end, the question may not be whether or not to offer specialise tracks, but when and how.

Bipra Prasun Das studies Computer Science and Engineering at North South University.

How to choose a Computer Science specialisation

ASSESS YOUR INTERESTS

Do you enjoy building apps, understanding algorithms, or analysing data? Match your interests with areas like Software Engineering, AI, or Data Science.

EXPLORE THE JOB MARKET

Research current trends. Fields like AI, Cybersecurity, Machine Learning, and Cloud Computing have high demand and growth potential.

TALK TO SENIORS AND FACULTY

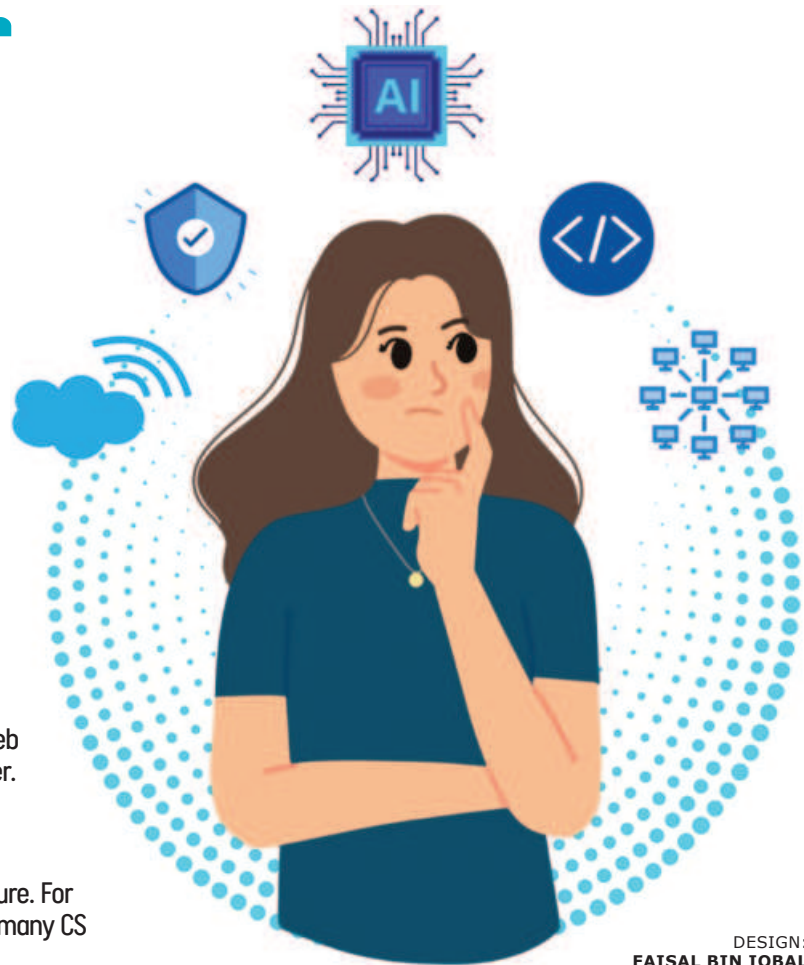
Given their experience in the field, they can offer insight into the workload, relevance, and career paths of each specialisation.

CONSIDER YOUR STRENGTHS

Strong in math? AI or algorithms may suit you. Like design and interaction? Consider web development. If you are well-versed in a particular field, pursuing it becomes a bit easier.

THINK LONG-TERM

Choose a path that excites you and remains relevant in the tech industry's evolving future. For instance, AI is all the rage right now and is expected to shape future industries. Hence, many CS students are eager to specialise in this particular field.



DESIGN: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

NOTICE BOARD

BRAC University CFO appointed Treasurer

Ariful Islam, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of BRAC University, has been appointed as its Treasurer on July 10, by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Islam joined the university in December 2020 and is currently leading finance, IT, procurement, international student and scholarship functions, and a new campus project. He is also the chairman of IPDC Finance PLC and its Risk Management Committee and a nominated director of the Ayesha Abed Foundation.

Islam has held senior executive roles at British

American Tobacco (BAT) Group across Asia Pacific markets for 23 years. He has also served as an independent director and chairman of the Board Audit Committee of Toshirfa Industries Limited.

Islam attained a BSc (Honours) in Economics from Scottish Church College, Calcutta University, India, and an MBA in Finance from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University. He has also obtained an Advanced Diploma in Management Accounting from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (UK).



Global Spell Bee 2025 national final concludes at North South University



The Bangladesh national segment of the Global Spell Bee 2025 came to its conclusion at North South University (NSU) on July 12. Finalists showcased their English language skills, analytical thinking, and academic excellence. Organised by EduPro Concepts BD Ltd., in association with GateKeeper and Help the Future, and hosted by North South University Debate Club, the event served as a significant platform for enhancing the linguistic skills and global awareness of students from grades 4 to 12.

As part of the internationally recognised Global Spell Bee competition, the national final was not just a contest; it was a joyful celebration of learning, resilience, and the power of words. The top-performing students from the National segment will represent Bangladesh at the international segment in Dubai this October, where participants from around 50 countries will compete for global recognition and a transformative educational opportunity.

A distinguished group of guests attended the closing ceremony. Professor Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of NSU and Chairman of Grameen Bank, was present as the Chief Guest. In his remarks, he praised the initiative, stating, "Competitions like the Global Spell Bee help students become smarter, more confident, and better at expressing their thoughts. I am proud that NSU and the NSU Debate Club have hosted such an inspiring event, and to the brightest minds that are present here, the moment you entered and took part, you became a winner."

Joining him, Stephen Forbes, Country Director of

British Council Bangladesh, emphasised the lifelong benefits of learning, saying, "Education gives you choices. The more you learn, the more life brings you choices. We are proud to witness such brilliant performances from the students today."

Mohammad Inzamul Haque, Assistant Personal Secretary to the Education Adviser at the Ministry of Education, highlighted the broader value of such competitions, noting, "Competitions like the Global Spell Bee go beyond academics; they build confidence, discipline, and communication skills that today's students need to thrive in tomorrow's world."

The event saw intense competition across all categories. From written and oral rounds to month-long mentorship sessions, the various phases of the competition helped students grow both intellectually and personally. Participants received access to exclusive vocabulary resources, workshops, and expert guidance that improved their communication and comprehension skills.

Notably, in the senior category, there was a tie, prompting an exciting tiebreaker to determine the final winner, highlighting the incredible talent and determination among the top contenders. As a gesture of recognition and encouragement, every participant was awarded a certificate and medal, celebrating their hard work, courage, and passion for learning.

Nabiha Tahseen Nubah from Sunnydale School emerged as the champion in the senior category, while Ibnat Namira Ahmed from Summerfield International School claimed the top spot in the junior category.



Textile Hack 2025: Prototype Bazaar held at BUFT

BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) successfully hosted "Textile Hack 2025: Prototype Bazaar" on July 13, at its multipurpose hall to promote innovation and strengthen industry-academia collaboration in the textile sector. The event featured live prototype displays and pitching sessions by student teams, showcasing creative and sustainable solutions.

The event was presided over by Faruque Hassan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of BUFT, with Andre Carstens, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh, serving as the Chief Guest. Other distinguished guests included Md Moshuiul Azam Shajal, Member of the BUFT Board of Trustees; Prof. Dr Engr Ayub Nabi Khan, Acting Vice Chancellor of BUFT; Prof. Dr Alamgir Hossain, Treasurer of BUFT; Mohammed Zahidullah, Chief Sustainability Officer of DBL; Sheikh Saifur Rahman, former General Secretary of the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh; Shohel Anwar Apu, Assistant Professor of Shanto-Mariam University; Sharmily Sarker, Head of the Department of Fashion Studies at BUFT; and BUFT faculty members, officials, and students.

In the final round, the selected teams presented their innovative ideas before the panel of judges, followed by a prototype marketplace and networking session. In this segment, "Green Wave" from Shanto-Mariam University was crowned Champion, "Fab-Board" from Rangpur Textile Engineering College became Runner-up, and BUFT's "Fab 5" team won the People's Choice Award. Through this initiative, BUFT reaffirmed its commitment to playing an active role in fostering sustainable development in Bangladesh's textile and apparel industry and nurturing young innovators.

STUDY ABROAD

THE IMPACT OF RISING COSTS on international students in the UK

The United Kingdom has maintained a top position in the list of destinations for students to pursue their undergraduate, postgraduate, and research degrees. The promise of high-quality education, international exposure, and improved career opportunities continues to attract applicants each year. However, the financial landscape for studying in the UK has become increasingly difficult to manage due to economic shifts both in the UK and in Bangladesh.

AM BISWAS

"I chose the UK because it is known globally for its quality education and skill-based learning," said Md Rawnak Hossain, a student at the University of Hertfordshire. Asif Rahman Shuvo, a student at the University of the West of Scotland in Glasgow, shared a similar experience saying, "My main motivation was the quality of education, global recognition of UK degrees, and the opportunity to gain international exposure and work experience. Another great thing about the UK is that most master's programmes are just one year long. Unlike in other countries, you don't have to worry about studying and paying tuition fees for two years."

However, inflation in the UK and fluctuations in the currency exchange rate have increased the financial burden on international students from Bangladesh.

"I arrived in September 2024, and since January 2025, the cost of living has definitely gone up," Rawnak shared. "The rise in the Pound (GBP) rate in contrast with the Bangladeshi Taka (BDT), especially due to the economic situation in Bangladesh, has made things more expensive for us. The cost of sending money from home has become a lot more expensive," Asif added.

One of the biggest concerns is the rising exchange rate. In January 2025, 1 GBP equaled 148.09 BDT. By the end of June 2025, this rate had increased to 168.44 BDT – a 13.73 percent increase in just six months. This means students now need to give more taka to afford the same expenses in the UK to cover their tuition fees, rent, food, transport, and other daily essentials.

Fariha Nowshin, who has studied in both Canada and the UK said, "Given my experiences in both countries, I would say the cost of living is definitely higher in the UK for a student. Prices of goods, food items, groceries, and even rent are generally higher. Public transport like using trains is also quite costly."

Fariha added, "The cost of living also varies by location. Rent in Central London is much higher than in East London. A shared accommodation in East London might cost around 500 to 600 GBP per month, with or without utility charges, whereas in central London, it could be anywhere from 800 to 1,000 GBP. This applies to other cities in the UK as well, it really depends on the location, its popularity, and demand."

Tuition fees for international students in the UK are already high, and many institutions increase their fees after each intake. On top of that, UK student visa requirements may require proof of substantial financial support, which becomes harder to meet as the value of the GBP rises.

Even with scholarships, many students are finding it difficult to cover the full cost of studying abroad. Families are often forced to reassess their financial plans, seek alternative funding, or consider studying in more affordable countries. "I don't feel the financial strain right now, because during the visa process, I made sure all my tuition and living costs were covered," Rawnak added. "But I think students should always have a financial backup if they want to complete their studies here," he explained.

"My tuition fees are 14,500 GBP, and I pay around 600



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

GBP for rent and another 400 GBP for groceries and other monthly expenses," he continued. "I rely on family support for my tuition and work part-time to manage monthly costs. Sometimes, I still need extra help from home."

Asif shared, "While the cost of living has increased, I've been able to manage my expenses better because I live in Scotland, where costs are lower than in London. I can cover my costs mostly through family support and personal funds. Sticking to a strict budget and planning everything out has definitely helped. If one pays part of the fee from home and saves a little each month, working extra during the summer break can make it easier to cover the full tuition."

International students are permitted to work part-time of up to 20 hours per week as per the directive of the UK government. Through this, they can earn up to 12.21 GBP per hour, which is the minimum wage set from April 2025. Students can find part-time work in their own universities or nearby local shops.

However, not all students may be able to find part-time work to cover their expenses.

As Asif noted, "Other Bangladeshi students who are a bit smart and live outside the main cities are also managing their monthly expenses quite well through part-time work." He added, "Most of the people I've met since coming here are doing quite well. Those who are smart, confident, and hardworking usually don't face much difficulty finding a job. While having references is important, it's equally essential to have the ability to introduce yourself and connect with others when entering a new environment."

The increasing cost of studying in the UK may prompt some students to look for other options unless more

financial aid or exchange rate stability becomes available. For now, many students are caught between ambition and affordability, hoping to pursue their dreams but also having to adapt to the rising financial demands. "I haven't had to make major lifestyle changes, but I've always stuck to a strict monthly budget," Rawnak said.

"In the UK, the cost of living gradually increases every year, but the best thing I've noticed since coming here is that prices don't suddenly shoot up like they often do in our country. Moreover, the government adjusts wages each year in line with the rising costs," shared Asif.

Tasneem Tarannum, a study abroad counsellor at Gateway Global Study, explained, "The number of students applying to the UK has recently declined due to rising costs as well as several policy changes. Spouse visas are now only being given for research based programmes, which has caused fewer students to apply."

She adds, "In addition, new immigration rules are being imposed, including a proposed increase in the timeline for permanent residency from five to ten years. Alongside, the post-study work visa for international students is also expected to be reduced from 24 months to 18 months. As a result, more students are now opting for alternative destinations such as Australia and European countries like Finland, Denmark, and Sweden."

Despite shifting policies, rising financial pressures, and changing global preferences, the UK continues to attract students with its globally recognised education and long-term opportunities for academic and career growth.

CAMPUS LIFE

The woes and wonders of being A TEACHING ASSISTANT

University is more than just learning lecture slides and filling out MCQ sheets. There's room to learn so much outside of the class, with opportunities awaiting those willing to take advantage of them. One of those opportunities is a teaching assistantship. While the prospect may sound enticing, it comes with its own kind of stress. So, why exactly do students choose to become teaching assistants (TA)? And is it worth the effort?



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

RAFID KHANDAKER

"I chose to become a TA primarily to develop networking and organisational skills, as well as to earn extra income," said Sumaiya Nasrin Sadiya, a teaching assistant at the Department of Physical Sciences of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). Being a TA requires you to regularly interact with students and faculty alike, making it the perfect environment to nurture effective communication skills. Not only that but you can also forge fruitful relationships with faculty members, whose mentorship, advice, and even recommendation letters may prove invaluable down the line.

Often in universities that operate under an open credit system, it is difficult for one to feel like they're part of a community as students are likely to have different course mates every semester. However, being a TA can change that.

"You get to meet other like-minded individuals who share the same passion for your major as you do," explained Aleha Wasimat, a TA at the Department of Economics of North South University. When you are a TA, you find a group of people that you can constantly turn to, giving you the opportunity to form friendships.

There is also something to be said about the satisfaction of helping people, which is at the core of a teaching assistantship. You stand by the brightest minds of our country, helping them prepare become the next generation of scholars.

"The best part is how rewarding it feels to help students. I really enjoy receiving their respect and seeing them succeed," said Sumaiya. Witnessing one's service tangibly benefit people's lives is a gift that not many jobs can offer.

However, just like any other job, it is not all sunshine and rainbows, and a teaching assistantship comes with its own share of drawbacks.

"I continuously have to handle checking the students' scripts and assist them even if I am at a crucial moment for my own studies," said Ramisa Tasnim, a TA at the Department of English at East West University (EWU). This is one of the biggest problems that TAs tend to face – one that was echoed by all those who were interviewed. When exam season comes around, not only do their own study load increase, but it is accompanied with an uptick in script checking and exam proctoring duties. This can prove to be unbearable for many as their grades may take a hit.

Another concern that the TAs emphasised on was the pay. They all stated that the remuneration they receive is not sufficient, considering the amount of work they have to do. Therefore, those who are looking to become a TA purely for the money should reconsider, as it will likely leave much to be desired. Furthermore, this reflects the general treatment of TAs, where they may be expected to do tasks that are not in the job description.

"Mismanagement of the department are the major reasons for the workload being more intolerable than it should be," said Ramisa, highlighting the responsibility university authorities have in ensuring TAs are treated fairly.

"Some faculties may expect you to help them with their personal research projects, such as doing literature reviews," said Aleha. While the added responsibility has its own set of pros and cons, the extra workload could prove to be too much for some to handle. For others, however, it is an opportunity to hone their research skills and gain valuable experience from experts in their field.

"Although it is reasonably possible that additional work can be done within the office hours when there is no active student consultation, the TA should have the right to refuse it without prejudice," asserted Dr Gazi M Hassan, Professor at the Department of Economics at NSU. This highlights the importance of on-campus employment that is rarely discussed – the right to refuse additional work. Even if additional duties are assigned, the expectation for students to carry them out must be communicated and remuneration adjusted accordingly.

All of this just goes to show just how much your experience as a TA can vary. Not every TA will have the same workload. In fact, it may vary based on the faculty member they have to work with or courses that they are assigned. For instance, if one is assigned a faculty member that focuses heavily on exams and assignments, then naturally the workload will be higher when it comes to script checking. Also, some particularly demanding classes may have a large fraction of students who are struggling, with whom TAs might have to spend a lot of time explaining concepts and helping with coursework during office hours.

At the end of the day, being a TA is not for everyone. No job is. But if one has the work ethic for it and is able to leverage the opportunities it opens up, then it might just be the right fit. It is a great addition to anyone's CV, especially those who hope to pursue a career in academia. Thus, the question of whether or not being a TA is worth the effort depends largely on the individual and what they make of the opportunity.

Rafid is on a quest to romanticise the crushing mundanity of life. Annoy him at rafidkhandaker@gmail.com.