



## WHAT NO BROCHURE TELLS YOU

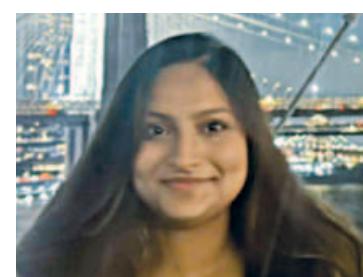
### FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Every year, thousands of students leave Bangladesh to pursue their higher education abroad. While glossy brochures and university websites highlight academic excellence and vibrant campus life, the lived experiences of international students reveal the less glamorous—yet deeply meaningful—side of the journey. We spoke to three Bangladeshi students studying in the United States, Australia, and Canada. Their insights capture both the challenges and the opportunities that come with this life-changing decision.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOLARSHIPS, COMMUNICATION, AND SMALL TALK



Zunayed



Amrin



Rafid

For Amrin Tasnim Rafa, now at Kenyon College in the United States, money and communication were the biggest hurdles. "Ask for more scholarship money, and apply to more places to increase the odds of getting it," she says. "Both quality and quantity of applications matter."

Even after arriving, the adjustment wasn't easy. Rafa recalls being

"intimidated by professors and administrative figures and avoiding communicating my needs with them." What helped was seeking out campus counselling and other mental health services—a reminder that support systems exist, but students have to make the first move to access them.

Cultural differences also hit hard. To cope, Rafa stays connected to

home while reminding herself that people everywhere share the same highs and lows of life.

"There will always be something that you can find in common with people from the opposite end of the world," she explains. She also holds onto the idea that her unique background enriches the communities she has joined in the U.S.

Practical benefits, like work opportunities and health insurance, vary from one American university to another. Rafa advises incoming students to study the details of their financial aid packages carefully and to learn the F-1 visa work regulations, including CPT and OPT. Her biggest preparation tip? "Small talk—very, very important. Good conversation skills go a LONG way in getting jobs, getting into the classes and clubs you want, and not being socially isolated/excluded."

### ADJUSTING TO PRACTICAL REALITIES

At Monash University in Melbourne, Rafid Saadman Rasul quickly discovered that studying abroad is more about hands-on skills than memorising theory.

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## Mental Health Abroad

A growing concern for students

### E. RAZA RONNY

Studying abroad brings more than academic challenges. It often places unexpected mental health burdens on students, especially those far from home.

### HIGH STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH RISKS

According to research in the National Library of Medicine, among 360 undergraduate medical students, roughly half of overseas students reported symptoms of depression (50.30 per cent) and anxiety (52.5 per cent), and 41.3 per cent experienced stress, significantly higher than their domestic peers.

More broadly, international students are not immune to distress. A 2023 data from Purdue University shows that roughly half screened positive for major depressive disorder, generalised anxiety, eating disorders, or suicidal ideation. Despite this, international students seek help far less often than domestic students.

### HOMESICKNESS, LONELINESS, AND CULTURAL PRESSURE

Many international students face isolation and cultural adjustment challenges. For instance, among Chinese students studying in the U.S., 45 per cent reported depression, and 29 per cent reported anxiety. What's more, 27 per cent of them were unaware of on-campus mental health services.

### MENTAL HEALTH AMONG DOMESTIC STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

Even within Bangladesh, students face mounting pressure. A study at local universities found that 72 per cent exhibited depressive symptoms, 40 per cent experienced moderate to severe anxiety, and 53 per cent had poor mental health overall, especially during the COVID-19 peak.



### WHY THIS MATTERS

These figures reveal a clear trend, whether at home or abroad, students are at heightened risk of mental health issues. When living overseas, these risks are compounded by isolation, academic pressure, immigration stress, and limited awareness of support systems.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE

#### Universities and counsellors should:

- Raise awareness of available mental health resources,
- Offer culturally sensitive support,
- Normalise seeking help,
- Train peer mentors to detect early signs of distress.

Families and institutions must recognise that mental health isn't secondary to academic success, it is essential to it. Ensuring students can thrive emotionally is as important as preparing them academically.

## Guiding beyond admissions

### FOR BANGLADESHI STUDENTS

For Bangladeshi students, navigating the complex world of international admissions can feel overwhelming. MN Global positions itself as more than just an agency. It promises a professional, transparent, and supportive partnership from the first consultation to the moment a student settles abroad.

What sets MN Global apart is its emphasis on honesty. Rather than making empty promises, the team provides clear assessments of each student's qualifications and potential. This helps families make informed decisions and avoid costly missteps.

### THE ROADBLOCKS STUDENTS FEAR MOST

The journey abroad is not without hurdles. Surveys show that 66–73% of prospective students cite the cost of living and finances as their biggest concern, with 57% worried about scholarships. Rising tuition fees, housing costs, and currency fluctuations can make studying abroad feel financially daunting.

Just behind finances come visa challenges. Around 47% of students identify visa processes as a major stress point, and over 21% say delays in appointments or processing forced them to postpone confirming their admission. These anxieties

are real and often derail even the most determined applicants.

### WHY GUIDANCE MATTERS

Beyond paperwork, these challenges highlight the need for clear, reliable guidance. Students often feel pressure to pick the "right" university or course without fully understanding long term implications for careers, finances, or settlement prospects. Families, meanwhile, struggle to balance pride with worry, knowing the decision involves significant sacrifice.

This is where responsible counselling makes a difference—helping students weigh financial commitments against realistic outcomes,

preparing them for visa requirements and timelines, and supporting them in adjusting to life abroad.

For many families, what matters most is reassurance: knowing that their children are making informed choices, not rushing into decisions shaped by hype or misinformation. Studying abroad will always involve risk and uncertainty, but with the right preparation, students can turn those obstacles into opportunities.

At its core, the admissions journey is less about forms and approvals, and more about giving students the confidence to thrive in a new environment. Guidance that addresses both practical hurdles and emotional realities is what turns ambition into achievement.

