

DON'T GET FOOLED

A parent's guide to spotting fake agents and offers

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For many Bangladeshi families, sending a child abroad to study is a lifelong dream. But with the rise of fake agents and fraudulent offers, that dream can quickly turn into a financial nightmare. Parents often invest their savings only to discover that the promised university,

scholarship, or visa does not exist.

The truth is simple: genuine universities and embassies never guarantee admissions, scholarships, or visas. Scammers, however, thrive on these false promises.

HOW TO STAY SAFE

The easiest way to protect yourself is to verify every claim. Always check official university websites for admission rules and fees. If you receive an offer letter, email the university directly to confirm it.

Secondly, look for accreditation because genuine universities are listed with their national education boards. Embassies also provide lists of recognized institutions and updated visa requirements.

Parents can also talk to alumni. Thousands of Bangladeshi students are studying abroad, and many are happy to share their experiences. A quick conversation can often save you from months of trouble.

RED FLAGS TO WATCH

Parents should be cautious if they notice

- ☛ Guarantees of admission or visa because no one can promise this.
- ☛ Unrealistic scholarships that cover "everything" with no conditions.
- ☛ Cash-only demands without receipts or proof of payment.
- ☛ No official documents or offer letters that cannot be verified.
- ☛ High-pressure tactics urging families to pay immediately.

THESE ARE CLEAR SIGNS THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG.

PROTECTING YOUR MONEY

Money is usually where the scam happens. Never pay tuition to an agent. Always transfer funds directly to the university account using official bank channels. Keep copies of every transaction, both digital and printed.

If needed, consider using an education loan or an FDR-backed plan, which adds transparency and helps create a clear financial trail.

FINAL WORD

Studying abroad can open doors for Bangladeshi students, but scams can close them forever. The best way to protect your child's future and your savings is to stay cautious. Trust only official sources, double-check every offer, and remember: real opportunities never need fake guarantees.

A PARENT'S QUICK CHECKLIST

Before sending money or signing papers, ask yourself:

- ☛ Is the university listed officially?
- ☛ Did I verify directly with the admissions office?
- ☛ Is the scholarship on the university website?
- ☛ Do I have receipts and proof of payment?

If the answer is no, do not move forward.



WHAT NO BROCHURE TELLS YOU

FROM PAGE S5

"Well into the 2nd year, a lot of the theory being taught was already familiar to me from high school," he says. "But when it came to practical classes, labs, and projects where we had to build or assemble something, I was countries behind."

The social transition was equally tough. "Making new friends is also hard," Rafid admits.

Domestic students often arrive with existing networks, leaving international students to build relationships from scratch. Food differences and Melbourne's notoriously patchy public transport didn't make things easier.

Still, Rafid highlights the upsides of studying in Australia, like the clean air, water, high-quality education, and friendly people. Students also get the opportunity to be themselves.

The country also offers valuable work

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mattered, and expenses added up quickly," he recalls. What helped was learning to budget, prioritising needs over wants, and building relationships both online and in Canada.

Homesickness still lingers, especially during long stretches away from home. Zunayed copes through small rituals—Bangla food, music, and following news from Bangladesh. "It's a combination of counting the days until I am able to visit Bangladesh again with the little things, such as eating a dish from back home."

On the positive side, Canada offers work opportunities that fit better with student life. International students can work up to 24 hours per week during the semester and full-time during summer breaks. "A lot of well-known companies (Google, IBM, and the Big Four) hire students during the summer as paid interns," Zunayed notes. Health insurance is also included in student fees, covering everything from hospitalisations to dental and travel insurance.

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THOSE WHO'VE BEEN THERE

Across continents, one theme stands out: preparation goes far beyond academics. Students who thrive abroad emphasise communication skills, financial literacy, and mental resilience. They also remind future applicants not to underestimate the emotional toll of leaving their support systems behind.

As Rafa puts it, "Apply to a LOT of places and put effort into your applications. Just submitting the application form is often not enough." Rafid insists students focus on building a future rather than clinging to low-wage survival jobs. Zunayed's advice is simple but powerful: "Everything will not always go as planned, and that's okay."

For anyone dreaming of studying abroad, these voices paint a fuller picture—one that includes hardship, resilience, and growth alongside the promised opportunities.

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."

opportunities, though he warns against falling into the trap of low-wage part-time jobs. "Focus on studies, do courses, attend seminars, work on startups, go to networking events, socialise and have fun, and build your portfolio before getting into full-time roles."

His advice is blunt but practical: weigh whether you really need to study abroad. With the high cost of living, he stresses, "If you NEED to do part-time jobs to support yourself, you should not be studying abroad."

RESILIENCE AND REBUILDING

For Zunayed Ahmed, now at Seneca Polytechnic in Canada, the hardest part of moving wasn't academic but emotional. "I wish I knew how important it is to be mentally strong," he reflects. "The support system I had back home in terms of friends, family, and some luxuries that I took for granted simply disappears overnight."

Two early struggles stood out: managing finances and second-guessing the decision to leave home. "Every dollar



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