

■ EDUCATION ■

# How are HSC examinees reacting to UNIVERSITY ADMISSION TESTS' ROUTINES?

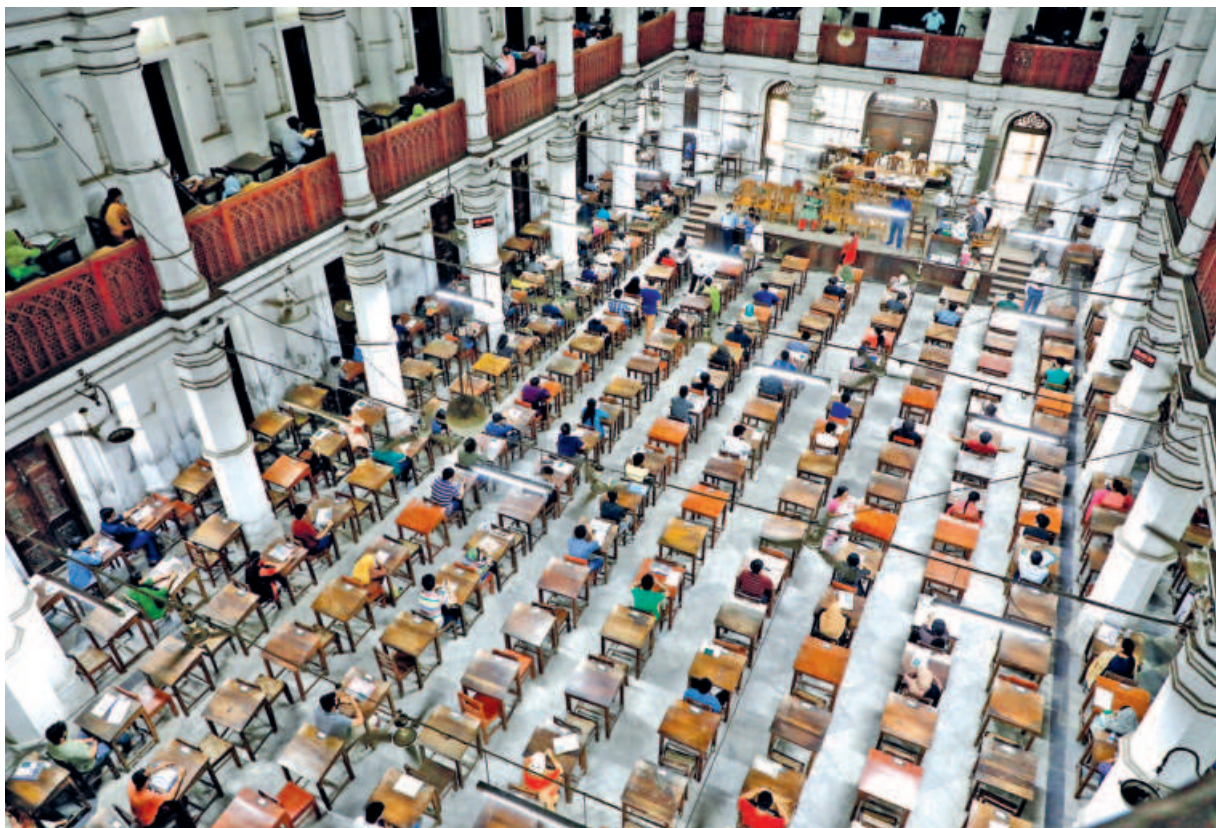


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**AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE**

It's difficult to overstate the weight that the university admission phase carries for a freshly graduated high school student. From starting supplementary coaching classes as soon as the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination ends to completely going off the grid during the final days of preparation, students seldom take this phase lightly.

So, it should come as no surprise that admission candidates face an immense amount of mental pressure. Unfortunately for the latest batch of HSC examinees, this mental pressure has been exponentially aggravated due to changes in various admission tests' routines and structures.

After talking to almost a dozen candidates, it became clear that the biggest shock thus far has been Dhaka University (DU).

First of all, the exam date for DU's Institute of Business Administration (IBA) has been set to November 28 — less than a month and half after the HSC results were published. In comparison, the previous admission test for the 33rd batch was held nearly three months after the HSC results came out. This dramatic and unexpected time crunch has sent both students and tutors into a state of panic.

Itefak Bin Hafiz, a student at IBA, DU and an instructor at Cognita Educare, was dumbfounded when he learned that the admission test would be held in November. He says,

"We designed our course estimating the exam to be held in the latter half of December at the earliest. Now, we have to reevaluate our expectations and squeeze in extra classes to make up for the fact that we're virtually a month behind on schedule."

He also adds, "Tutors and coaching centres that leave mock tests for the absolute tail-end of their course are under a lot of fire right now, because there are concerns as to whether or not the students will be exam-ready by the end of November."

The dates for the other units of DU also sparked some confusion among prospective examinees. In the previous admission season, for instance, the Science unit's exam was held after the Medical Admission Test (MAT) and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) preliminary examination took place. This has been the norm for a few years now. So, when DU announced earlier this week that the entrance exam for the science unit would be held on December 20, candidates were left with a lot of questions.

"Students usually set mental expectations for how their university admission journey will unfold, drawing from the timelines of previous years exams," says Azmayeen Sadat, an HSC 2025 examinee from Notre Dame College.

He continues, "That expected schedule helps those applying to multiple disciplines — like medical, engineering, or other STEM fields — structure their routines and decide what to study and when. So, when

we saw that the MAT and DU exams were scheduled so close together, with BUET and other engineering exams likely following suit, it threw everyone into a state of anxiety. The new dates just didn't line up with what students had been preparing for."

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) has also announced their admission exams' timeline. While the exam dates — set for early January 2026 — have been met with relief from prospective examinees, a major change in the Business department was made without any prior official announcements.

According to the notice published on October 15, two separate entrance exams are to be held under the Faculty of Business Studies (FBS) — one solely for the BBA General aspirants, and another one for the accounting, management, finance, and marketing aspirants. In previous years, a single exam was held for the entire business studies department, which meant that an aspirant preparing for the DU IBA exam could sit for the BUP FBS exam as well with little to no extra preparation.

But as Golam Mostafa Shreshtha, a fresh HSC graduate from Dhaka City College puts it, that will likely no longer be the case. He shared, "BUP was seen as a competitive but far more realistic backup to DU IBA, particularly due to the fact that the former admitted a greater number of students. But with the BBA General exam being separated from the rest of the business studies department, it will most definitely mean that we'll be competing for far fewer seats with the same amount of preparation our seniors had."

Upon being asked about the rationale behind implementing this rule, Shreshtha replied, "I don't understand why the authorities would withhold such crucial information and dump it on us without any prior notice. It would make sense for them to announce the change now and actually enforce these revisions from the next intake onwards so that the candidates could align their goals accordingly."

As for medical aspirants hoping to appear for the MAT, certain changes are also in effect from this intake period onwards. For starters, medical and dentistry students will be sitting for a single, combined exam that will be held on the same day, based on the same question.

Surprisingly, these decisions were also announced quite abruptly. According to Takbir UI Islam, an MBBS aspirant from Mohammadpur Preparatory School & College, the implications of these impromptu announcements on the candidates is quite far-reaching.

"Usually, there's a general consensus that someone who had a less-than-ideal performance in the MAT can still try to turn things around in the BDS exam," he shares. "But since there will only be one unified exam this time, there's no second chance for anyone."

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One might be inclined to ridicule the examinees for complaining too much, arguing that everyone had the opportunity to prepare for the admission tests since the HSC exams ended. But one must also keep in mind that HSC results are a big determining factor behind a candidate's university admission journey. For instance, someone who aspired to pursue engineering in BUET might've failed to achieve GPA 5 in HSC, causing them to reevaluate their dreams and start preparing for a completely different discipline.

The shortened preparation period and multiple changes to exam structures mean that they'll be starting on the backfoot compared to everyone else. And when tens and hundreds of students compete for a single seat, even the slightest disadvantage can cause their dreams to slip away from them.