

## OFF CAMPUS

# The weight and wonder of being a final-year student



ILLUSTRATION: AZRA HUMAYRA

## ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

I once asked my friends what one piece of advice they would have given their first-year selves. Unsurprisingly, most of them had one common answer, and that was to enjoy it all while it lasts because your time in university dashes by faster than you think. Now, in my final year, the statement rings truer than ever.

Each time you refresh your Facebook feed, someone you know is graduating, starting an internship, landing a wonderful job, getting married or having kids. LinkedIn is a whole other sphere that demands a supplementary article. A two-minute scroll there leads you to a micro-dosage of existential horror every single time, without fail.

Sure, you're happy for them, but you keep thinking about when things will work out for you.

In the meantime, you are also bidding farewell to the last remnants of your student life. The hallways on campus, which once felt so familiar, seem out of reach, even when they are right in front of your eyes. The library, which bore witness to all your internal meltdowns before a quiz, feels like a safe haven. Your favourite *tong er mama*, the one who'd always greet you with the warmest smile, becomes yet another face that you won't see on a daily basis.

Your favourite classroom where the sunrays split right at the brink of 3 PM, shy yet radiant, feels elusive. That one favourite faculty whose classes you never missed becomes a fond memory. That 11 AM break when all your friends would be free feels more distant than ever before. That one corner right by the staircase, the designated hub for your friends, which now witnesses fewer and fewer people, rests empty.

Not many people grasp how exhausting and complex

this window of time really is, especially mentally. You are juggling your academics — quizzes, assignments, and projects. Despite all the pitfalls and uncertainties of life, it was one of the few things that was always constant.

Your sense of control shifts. Before, there was a roadmap — a structured curriculum consisting of routine classes, organised tasks, and specific deadlines. Now you navigate it all on your own. For many, including myself, no one has really taught us how to do that. There's nothing routine about learning to navigate adulthood. The concept of being an actual adult is no longer something you can carelessly brush off to contemplate later.

How do we accept so many changes all around us so easily?

But there are moments of growth, too. You realise how responsible you are now compared to your first-year self. You have learnt to manage time, even if only a little. You realise that it no longer makes sense to pull three all-nighters in a week, that it is physically impossible, and that sleep is now a priority, not merely optional.

You start being consistent. You are now more confident with public speaking. You are more careful about the type of people you mingle with and who you choose to hold close. You are grateful for all the friends you have made, the ones who never allow you to doubt yourself, who taught you to be a better friend, a better version of yourself, where you can go days without seeing them, and nothing can seem to mar the bond you have made.

Final year, in a nutshell, is being at odds with yourself. It's going to pass like any other phase in your life. And that is, perhaps, the harshest comfort in itself.

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## WHEN UNIVERSITY LIFE REACHES ITS END

Final-year students reflect on change, fear, and hope

### What are some of the major changes happening around you right now?

Some of my friends are going abroad to pursue their master's, and that's making me overthink about life and what I should do next. But I believe I need to finish this last step (my finals) properly first, and then everything will fall into place. I am not super optimistic, but I am hopeful.

- A student from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

A part of my childhood is going away. Many familiar faces are moving away from the circle. The topic of discussion has suddenly changed from the fun things to real-life stuff.

- Sk. Sinan Sayefee, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET)

### What makes you think that you might be falling behind your peers?

I have often felt like I am lagging behind my peers, largely because I lacked guidance and clarity about what I needed to do. I didn't know that joining clubs or participating in business competitions was important for building a strong profile in the job market. Since none of my friends or family had studied Business, I had no one to point me in the right direction. Being an introvert made things even harder as I found it difficult to connect with peers who were confident, well-networked, and seemed to always be in the know.

- Rumaisha Nowshin Fatema, North South University (NSU)

For me, the academic success of my close friends is the most triggering factor which makes me feel that way. I am studying the same as them, at times, more than them. Yet, the outcome mostly disappoints.

- Abrar Jahan Alvee, BRAC University (BRACU)

### In what ways have you grown or changed since entering your final year?

Something many people don't realise about being in your final year of university is how emotionally and mentally complex it can be. It's not just about finishing assignments or passing exams; it's a transition phase packed with pressure, uncertainty, and personal growth.

- Shahazad Ruhul Rafid, BRACU

I have become more mature and aware of the friends I make, as well as more prepared for the world.

- Nur Jahan, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

### What part of finishing university feels the heaviest for you?

The heaviest part of finishing university is the uncertainty about what comes next. After years of structured lectures, exams, and goals with clear deadlines, you are suddenly stepping into a world where the path isn't as defined. That uncertainty can feel overwhelming.

- Shahazad Ruhul Rafid, BRACU

Leaving friends and the good memories.

- Trina Saha, BUET