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NAVIGATING THE DIFFICULT PATH OF SWITCHING ONE'S MAJOR



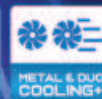
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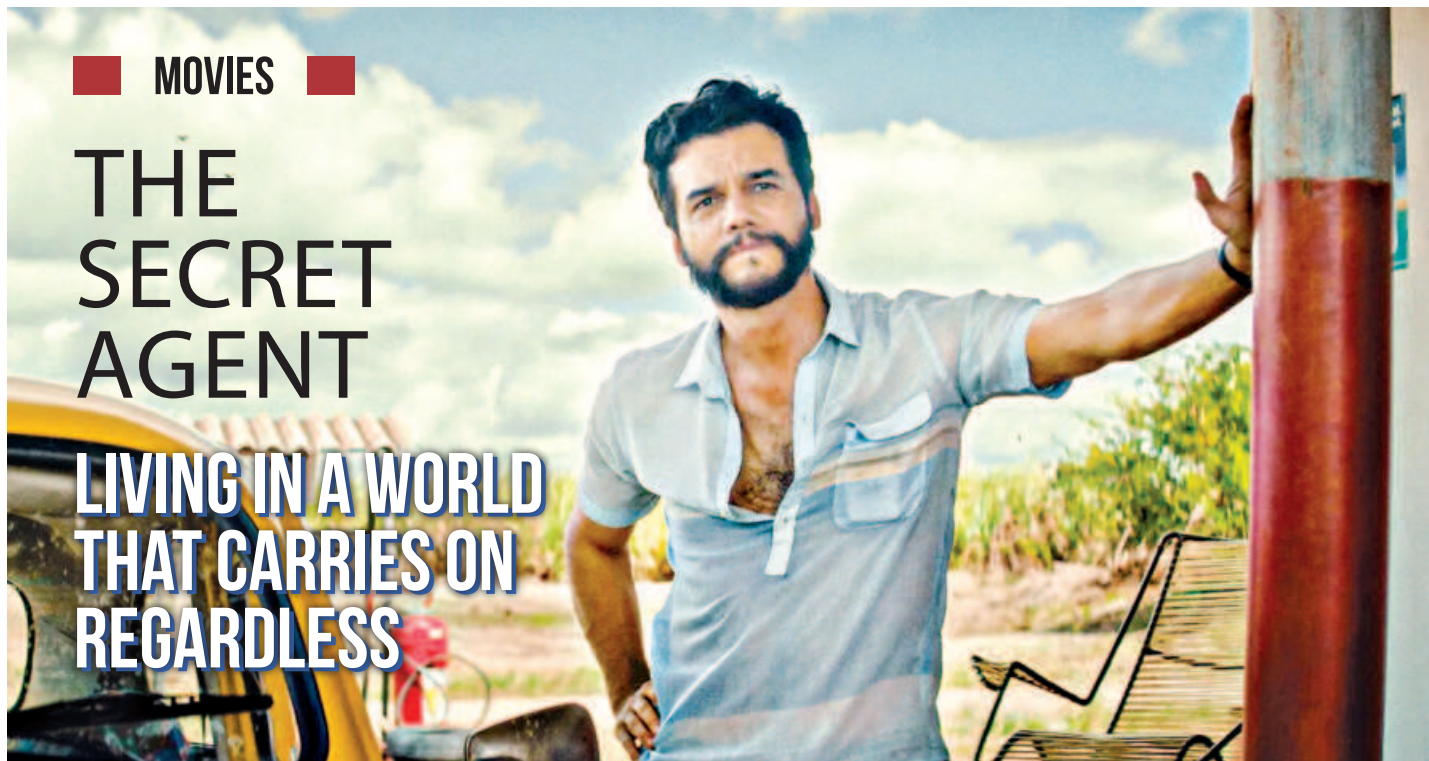


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AZRA HUMAYRA

There is something faintly perverse, and therefore, rather wonderful, about a film that opens on a rotting corpse and then refuses to make that the most alarming thing in the frame. *The Secret Agent*, directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho, is set in 1977 Brazil. The man at its centre, Armando Solimões, played with an almost frightening composure by Wagner Moura, is not a secret agent at all. He is a widower, a father, and an academic who has had the bad luck of irritating the wrong minister.

This is quite enough, in a military dictatorship, to turn one's life into a prolonged act of evasion. And so, he adopts the name 'Marcelo', who arrives in Recife in a bright yellow Volkswagen Beetle, which feels

like exactly the wrong colour for someone trying not to be noticed. But nothing in this film behaves quite as expected.

Recife itself is in the throes of Carnaval, all water guns and confetti, while somewhere not very far away, bodies are being disposed of with great efficiency. The contrast is not hammered home. It simply exists, which is what makes it so unsettling.

The plot unfolds in three parts, each teasing out another layer of Marcelo's predicament. There is his reunion with his son and his job at an identification office, a delicious irony given that he is living under an assumed identity. Lastly, there is the slow tightening of the net, as corrupt policemen and hired killers drift in and out of his orbit with casualness.

In *The Secret Agent*, the cinematography

has a way of appearing almost too relaxed for its own good, and that is precisely why it works. Mendonça Filho favours wide, densely populated frames that allow life to spill over. Crowds drift through Carnaval streets, interiors hum with small, telling movements, and even moments of danger unfold without visual hysteria. The script is similarly unhurried, almost novelistic in its structure. It loops through characters, detours into minor incidents, and lingers on processes that would be discarded in a more dutiful thriller.

Moura holds everything together with a performance that is all restraint and buried panic. Marcelo is not a hero in the conventional sense. He is simply a man trying to stay alive, to protect his son, and to hold on to some idea of himself.

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■ EDUCATION ■

THE ART OF LAST-MINUTE ASSIGNMENTS

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

It's a random Wednesday night for you. You either shift between Netflix and obscure YouTube rabbit holes or doomscrolling, doing everything possible except pretending to care about your assignment that's due the next night.

You get a text from your friend that says, "Hey, have you started? This essay is really testing my patience." Your heart sinks, nerves suspended in time. The audacity of her not to start the assignment on the due date! Why is she not wasting time like you, accompanying you in your dedicated procrastination? You brush off the text. Last-minute pressure has never failed you (pun intended), and it won't do so now. There's a very good reason why you continue to procrastinate.

The next evening, you finally feel the hues of panic ushering in. You open the assignment file. A 2000-word essay. To be completed in five hours. Meticulous research. Citations with an annotated bibliography. Yikes. Has the time finally come where you learn a lesson about the importance of time management?

With a tinge of guilt, you visit your dear friend, ChatGPT. Upon seeing it concoct the most ridiculous of citations from thin

air, unabashedly making up facts, and fabricating numbers as it goes, you quietly close the tab. Dread creeps in. The AC is on, but you feel a sweat trickling down your spine.

You're on your own. And you're out of time.

Soon, tabs bloom across your screen like a palette, disorderly yet unambiguous and aesthetic. Any bit which is relevant? Copy-paste. Rewrite. Copy-paste. Rewrite. You refuse to look at the clock. You cannot afford to. The adrenaline rushing through your fingertips sustains you to keep writing, or well, paraphrasing.

Over the next few hours, you throw yourself into your craft. What is food? What is a sip of water? What does a moment of rest feel like? Like an artist driven mad by his genius, you are consumed with the urge to create. After all, an artist always has a muse. For many, it's heartbreak or grief. For you, it's six cups of coffee, chaos and a deadline which keeps looming in.

At last, you see a shape, a pattern; the essay has a structure in that it somewhat makes sense. Abstract art and all that. It will do. Finally, a glance at the clock. 21 minutes till the deadline. Maybe you'll make it. The citations with the wretched annotated bibliography remain. Citation

generators come to your rescue, like always. As for the annotated bibliography, you write a bunch of perfunctory nothings just to get the job done.

There's no need to review if your essay has been formatted correctly, or even to take a look at the plagiarism percentage. There's no time, actually. God will take care of the rest.

Precisely three minutes are remaining when you realise you don't even know the Turnitin credentials. At a speed which would put the Flash to shame, you find it and log in. The only thing making your body function at the moment is a sheer adrenaline rush.

Right at the cusp of 11:59 PM, you hit "Submit" with shaky fingers, a racing heart, and a frenzied stillness. You did it. And this is exactly why you cannot bid farewell to the beautiful functionality of procrastination.

15 minutes later, your phone alerts you to a Google Classroom notification: "New Assignment" from another course.

Here we go again.

Anica Bushra Rahmaan offers a monthly glimpse into her life through this article. Relate to her through anicarahmaan@gmail.com

Using AI efficiently and ethically

Artificial intelligence (AI) is now a daily companion in student life. Used thoughtfully, it can enrich one's understanding and save time; used carelessly, it risks turning learning into mere output. The key lies in balance: treating AI as an aid, not a shortcut.

SMARTER, PERSONALISED LEARNING

AI can adapt to different learning styles, offering summaries, visuals, and tailored explanations. It helps students sift through dense material, identify key ideas, and revisit difficult sections—making study more efficient without replacing the effort of reading and thinking.



PLANNING, FEEDBACK, AND ACTIVE STUDY

From generating study schedules to offering instant feedback on essays or problem-solving, AI keeps students organised and responsive. Tools like flashcards and quizzes break complex topics into manageable parts, encouraging active engagement rather than passive consumption.

ETHICS OVER CONVENIENCE

Over-reliance on AI as a "quick fix" can weaken creativity and critical thinking. Ethical use means engaging with the material first, verifying outputs, and ensuring the final work reflects one's own understanding—not the machine's.




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EDUCATION



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NAVIGATING THE DIFFICULT PATH OF SWITCHING ONE’S MAJOR

Education should be a process of moulding a student’s curiosity. Our education system needs to offer us the chance to truly understand where we belong before pushing us into a battle for a single seat against thousands of others.

TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

The circuit lab was a space of quiet dread. While my classmates effortlessly navigated complex engineering problems, I struggled to grasp the most basic concepts. Initially, I thought it happened to everyone, and that I would soon overcome it. But for someone who has always been a serious student, scoring Ds and Es wasn’t just an academic hurdle; it was a total identity crisis. Then came a single elective in social science. I aced it, finding a rhythm that had eluded me for years. It was a moment of clarity, yet without a support system to encourage a shift, I remained trapped in a cycle of academic mediocrity. I graduated with frustration, knowing my potential might remain elsewhere, but the path forward seems to be in a haze.

My experience is not unique. In Bangladesh, the transition from high school to university is a narrow funnel, one that is often burdened by a heavy cultural expectation to pursue safe degrees like engineering or medicine. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC)’s 50th Annual Report, the country’s public universities offer barely 50,000 seats for first-year (honours) students. When compared to the 13.3 lakh students who sat for the HSC exams in 2024, it becomes clear that only about four to five percent of applicants will ever make it through those gates. This intense competition fosters a survivalist mindset. And, thus, students prioritise passing admission tests over identifying their true passions.

The pressure of studying a subject that does not resonate with a student’s core strengths has a documented impact on mental health. A 2023 study by the Aachol Foundation highlighted that academic pressure and dissatisfaction with chosen fields are leading causes of severe anxiety and depression among university students in Bangladesh. For many, the weight of a four-year degree feels less like a journey of discovery and more like a sentence they must serve.

Ahmed Zulquarnine Chowdhury, a student at BRAC University, is someone who navigated this weight for a long time. He spent seven semesters in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) before realising he was in the wrong place. For nearly three years, he followed a curriculum that felt like a series of chores rather than a path to a career. His experience at the Mohakhali campus was defined by a mismatch between his interests and the technical rigour of the lab-based environment.

“The moment it became clear to me was when I genuinely started to love learning,” Ahmed says. He explains that his time during the residential semester helped him understand that he belonged in a field related to critical thinking and the study of human nature. Switching to Anthropology in his ninth semester was not an easy choice, especially after spending so much time in CSE. However, he describes the process of switching as a search for mental peace.”

Ahmed points out that the administrative side of changing majors at a private university like BRAC University is relatively straightforward. He had to list his completed courses and meet with the programme coordinator of his prospective department. “The coordinator asked me the usual questions, including my reasoning for joining Anthropology and leaving CSE,” he notes. After getting approvals from both departments and submitting his grade sheet to a dedicated student centre, the switch was official. He did not have to drop a semester, which is a rare feat in the local academic landscape.

Omar Hossain, another seventh-semester student who moved from CSE to Anthropology at BRAC University, describes a similar gradual realisation. His turning point came during late-night coding sessions, where he found he could solve the problems but felt no curiosity about the results. A trip overseas exposed him to people from non-academic backgrounds, making him realise that his current path was not the only way to live.

“It was as though I had been in a black and white film, and all of a sudden somebody flicked on the colour,” Omar says of his first Anthropology classroom experience. In his previous department, the world was binary, consisting of only the right or wrong code. In his new department, he found people debating rituals, kinship, and social power. This shift allowed him to view the world differently, even applying anthropological theories to the anime he watches. “I have been able to observe mainstream anime like *One Piece* and *Naruto* as highly anthropological texts,” he explains.

he admits. Over time, as he became more engaged and happier with his studies, his family’s scepticism began to fade.

Nuzhat Tahsin’s move from Economics to Media and Journalism at North South University (NSU) in her third semester highlights the importance of finding a major that matches one’s personality. Although Economics is a high-demand field, Nuzhat found the heavy focus on abstract mathematical models and data points disconnected from her passion for social narratives. “I realised that analysing market trends wasn’t as fulfilling as documenting the human stories behind those trends,” she explains.

“Journalism allows me to merge information with a creative, narrative lens that Economics simply couldn’t provide.”

NSU’s framework facilitates such changes after the first semester, provided there are vacant seats in the desired department and the necessary transfer fees are paid. This structured flexibility enabled Nuzhat to transition into a field where her storytelling skills could truly thrive.

In some cases, students do not leave a faculty entirely but switch to a different branch within the same field. Humayera Tabassum Tunan, a recently graduated student from BRAC University, had moved from Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) to CSE during her first year. She felt she could not cope with the requirements of circuit design and lab work. “I already had a pre-existing affinity for programming,” she says. Tunan felt that CSE offered more diverse career options and a better fit for her skills.

Some basic courses like C and C++ are common to both departments. While she did exceptionally well in those

courses, circuits felt overwhelming to her. Later, she was able to transfer her credits and continue without losing time.

What happens in public universities?

While private university students often have the flexibility to change majors after a semester or two, the reality for public university students is far more rigid. Atique Tajwar, a recently graduated student from the Department of Robotics and Mechatronics Engineering (RME) at Dhaka University (DU), explains that the system is built on a series of locked doors. During the

admission process, students provide a choice list. If they are assigned a department they dislike, they can only “down-migrate” to a department that was lower on their list, provided that there are vacancies.

“You can only move to a department that was ranked lower on your list, and only if that department’s seats aren’t already full,” Atique explains. This window of opportunity is incredibly small, usually closing before the first-semester exams even begin. Once a student completes their first semester, they are essentially locked into that department for the next four years. If they want to change, their only option is to retake the entire university admission test the following year, which often involves the risk of a “gap year”.

Atique also highlights the financial aspect of this academic trap. Many students stay in departments they

What you should know before switching majors

It could impact your graduation timeline as switching majors often means lost credits, requiring extra semesters. This can also increase tuition costs and delay your entry into the workforce.

Changing majors should align with long-term passion. It’s not something you do just to escape boredom. Make sure you’re able to differentiate between temporary burnout and a genuine lack of interest in the field.

Research the career paths, job opportunities, and skill sets associated with the new major to ensure it genuinely aligns with your future goals.

dislike because they cannot afford the tuition of a private university. They are forced to rely on the reverence of the public institution, even if the curriculum leaves them unhappy. The process of formally cancelling an admission is also a hurdle. To get original transcripts back, students must navigate the administrative inefficiencies of the DU registrar building and pay various fees. Many choose to simply stop attending classes instead, leaving the seat vacant and unusable for anyone else.

Nawshaba”, a second-year student in the Zoology department at Jagannath University, echoes these frustrations. She explains that according to Jagannath University’s academic rules, major changes are strictly limited by merit positions and vacancies during the initial admission weeks. For someone stuck in a subject they dislike, the system offers very few exits. “In public universities, the competition is too high,” Nawshaba says. She notes that many students spend their lives wanting to study Physics but end up in Zoology because of their merit score.

The vacancy problem is a recurring theme in public institutions. Seats often open up when students leave for medical colleges or other higher-ranked public universities after they are certain that they have secured a seat. However, because the migration window is so short, these seats often remain empty for the duration of the four-year cycle of a specific department. Atique mentions that in his department, several students left midway through without formally cancelling their admission. This lack of administrative flexibility means that thousands of potential seats across the country go to waste every year, while other students remain trapped in subjects they have no interest in.

The disconnect between a student’s passion and their assigned major is a systemic issue that continues to define higher education in Bangladesh. While some manage to navigate the barriers to a different department, many others graduate with a sense of frustration. The stories of those who switched suggest that the risk of changing one’s path is often outweighed by the mental peace of finally understanding what one is learning.

Education should be a process of moulding a student’s curiosity. Our education system needs to offer us the chance to truly understand where we belong before pushing us into a battle for a single seat against thousands of others. This relentless competitiveness must end to make room for a system that values different passions. Whether in a public or private institution, the ability to pivot is essential for a student’s long-term success and mental well-being. Finalising a degree is a milestone, but doing so in a field that ignites curiosity is what truly prepares a graduate for the world outside.

**Name has been changed upon request*

Tagabun Taharim Titun is a content executive at The Daily Star.



Lamborghini museum architect delivers lecture at BRAC University

BRAC University hosted a lecture by Italian architect and designer Fabio Novembre – known for projects including the Lamborghini Museum and the AC Milan headquarters. Novembre founded Novembre Studio in 1994. His studio has created designs for global brands including Kartell, Stuart Weitzman, Cappellini, and Driade.

Named “Ambassador of Italian Design for Bangladesh in 2026”, Novembre engaged with leading institutions and industries in Dhaka from March 30 to April 2 as part of the Embassy of Italy in Dhaka’s observance of Italian Design Day 2026.

The lecture marked the 155th event of BRAC University’s Angan Lecture Series and was organised by the Department of Architecture under the School of Architecture and Design, in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy, Dhaka.

Presenting his work to students, Novembre spoke about how design can convey feelings, stories, and human identity. He encouraged

students to develop their own design thinking, not to be discouraged by setbacks, and to draw inspiration from personalities they admire.

He said that every person had unique qualities, emphasising that educational institutions should identify and support those strengths so that individuals can flourish.

Addressing the event, Ambassador of Italy to Dhaka Antonio Alessandro said the Italian Design Day initiative highlights design and architecture as tools to help address challenges related to the environment, transportation systems, and cities.

Earlier, Novembre and Alessandro toured BRAC University’s sustainable campus and described its architectural design as “groundbreaking”. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Syed Ferhat Anwar shared the university’s mission and vision, including its aim to become one of the leading universities of the Global South.



BUFT signs MoU with DPDT to establish Technology and Innovation Support Centre

BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Patents, Industrial Designs and Trademarks (DPDT) under the Ministry of Industries on April 2 to establish a Technology and Innovation Support Centre (TISC) at the university.

The initiative aims to strengthen research and innovation by providing access to patent databases, technical information, and support services, while promoting the protection, commercialisation, and transfer of intellectual property. Under the agreement, DPDT will serve as the national focal point, coordinating the TISC network and facilitating access to global patent resources with training support. BUFT will ensure necessary infrastructure, manpower, and operational management, along with promoting TISC services across academic and industry platforms.

At the signing ceremony, BUFT was represented by Faruque Hassan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Prof. Dr Engr Ayub Nabi Khan, Vice-Chancellor (Designate); and Prof. Dr Md Alamgir Hossain, Pro VC (Acting), along with senior university officials and faculty members. The event was also attended by Md Jahangir Hossain, Director General, DPDT; Dr Ashok Kumar Roy, Director (Patents and Industrial Designs); and Md Habibur Rahman, Deputy Director (Patents).

IUBAT signs MoU with BRACNet to strengthen industry-academia collaboration

International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BRACNet Limited (BNL) to promote mutually beneficial industry-academia collaboration.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr Md Momtazur Rahman, Registrar of IUBAT, and Arif Hossain, Head of Operations of BRACNet.

The signing ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, including Prof. Dr Abdur Rab, Vice-Chancellor; Prof. Selina Nargis, Treasurer and Director, Administration; Prof. Dr Md Monirul Islam, Dean, CEAT; Prof. Dr Utpal Kanti Das, Chairman, Computer Science and Engineering; Prof. Dr Sajal Saha, Director, Miyan Research Institute; and AKM Sharfuddin, Director, Placement and Alumni Office. From BRACNet, Md Yousuf Ali Emon, Assistant General Manager (ICT Sales); Afrin Kawsar, Team Lead, HR; and Saiful Arefin, Head of Transmission, were present, along with senior officials and faculty members from both institutions.

The MoU aims to establish a strong partnership focused on innovation, knowledge sharing, and the practical application of academic and technological expertise. Through this collaboration, both institutions seek to support student development, enhance institutional capacity, and contribute to digital transformation initiatives.



International climate course launched with support from four universities

A two-month international course titled “Environmental Science and Climate Action” has been launched with support from four universities.

The initiative is being implemented by Stamford University Bangladesh, the University of Dundee’s Binks Institute for Sustainability, Michigan State University’s Asia Hub, and Nanjing Agricultural University. The programme is being organised by the Centre for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS), the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER), and Mission Green Bangladesh.

The inauguration ceremony was held on April 2 at the Vice-Chancellor’s conference room at BRAC University (BRACU). Prof. Dr Sharif N As-Saber, Vice-Chancellor of Stamford University Bangladesh, attended as the chief guest, while the course was formally inaugurated by BRACU registrar Dr David Dowland.

Delivering the welcome address, Prof. Dr Ainun Nishat, Emeritus Professor, BRACU, emphasised that climate change is no longer merely a theoretical concern but a matter of survival. Prof. Dr As-Saber highlighted the need to integrate academic learning with field-level research and innovation. Dr Dowland stated that there should be no gap between education and practical action in ensuring environmental protection.

Others who spoke at the event included Prof. Dr Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, Chairman of the Centre for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS)



and a professor in the Department of Environmental Science at Stamford University Bangladesh; Raufa Khanam, Deputy Director of C3ER; and Ahsan Rony, Executive Director of Mission Green Bangladesh. Dr Nandan Mukherjee, Senior Lecturer and Director at the Binks Institute for Sustainability, University of Dundee; Jennifer Wargo, Associate Director of the Asia Hub at Michigan State University; and Dr Liu Yutao, Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Office at Nanjing Agricultural University, also delivered remarks.

Among those present at the event were Prodeepto Mobarook, Head of PRD at Stamford University Bangladesh; Md Nasir Ahmed Patowary, a lecturer in the Department of Environmental Science at Stamford University Bangladesh; and Marziat Rahman, Lead Researcher (Pollution and Climate Change) at CAPS.

EDUCATION

EAST WEST UNIVERSITY

An inclusive, affordable campus, prioritising student well-being

CAMPUS DESK

East West University's (EWU) name conveys an aspiration that extends beyond geography to philosophy. The institution was founded in 1996 to balance two intellectual traditions: the rigour of the West and the rootedness of the East. The Chairperson of the EWU Board of Trustees, Prof. Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, did not consider the name to be decorative. It was a statement of intent to create an environment where local customs and international academic standards could coexist peacefully.

After returning from a 13-year stint at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Dr Farashuddin and a small group of like-minded educationists set out to provide access to high-quality education rather than rhetoric, to pay back what he refers to as a "tremendous debt" to society.

Although there were only 20 students in the first cohort, the concept was ambitious from the start. This was intended to be a purposeful intervention into the disparities that shaped access to education in Bangladesh, rather than another exclusive private school. According to Dr Farashuddin: "I felt it was critical to provide standard, quality education to the children of middle- and low-income families. We are very proud of that vision, and we have pursued it without interruption."

This idea would later define the institution's course. The founding philosophy of the university, which was designed to both support and challenge the hierarchies ingrained in higher education, persisted over time as the campus expanded—physically, institutionally, and in terms of reputation.

EWU's operational logic has always been anchored in accessibility. Students from middle-income and lower-income families, who frequently find themselves priced out of private higher education, were the target for the institution's initial design. This was a deliberate structural decision. Highlighting the university's long-standing dedication to reducing inequality, Dr Farashuddin states, "I think that the middle class are the backbone of democracy, growth, and prosperity, and we are determined to minimise the disparity that exists."

The university's financial ethos, which operates with an almost austere discipline, is where this commitment is most evident. According to Dr Farashuddin, the framework that enables the organisation to operate as a truly non-profit organisation



PHOTO: COURTESY

is "no wastage, no leakage, and, most importantly, preventing any corruption". EWU uses its financial prudence to keep tuition costs relatively low.

This strategy is ideological rather than just administrative. In 2000, the university made a bold resolution that any operational surplus would be fully reinvested in the school, either through direct student support or infrastructure development. By doing this, the university set itself apart from the profit-driven inclinations that sometimes characterise private education. As a result, the campus continues to grow in size and amenities while paying attention to the financial needs of its students.

The consistent expansion from 20 students in 1996 to over 16,000 today is often cited as proof of the institution's success. Beneath that growth, however, is a more subdued accomplishment: the establishment of an environment in which educational opportunities are not solely determined by financial status. In this way, EWU's affordability is a long-term practice that continues to influence who is able to enter, stay, and eventually prosper within its walls.

Relatively low tuition, coupled with a comprehensive scholarship framework impacts a substantial segment of its student population. Keeping costs low is the first step toward inclusion. The second step is actively redistributing institutional

resources to people who might not be able to stay in the system otherwise. Financial aid is at the heart of how the university sees its role.

Since the beginning, merit has been one of the main ways to get support. Students who get the top positions on the admission test get full scholarships, and students with great grades, like a "Golden GPA-5", get a 100 percent tuition waiver when they are accepted. Some people who did well, but not quite as well, are given partial waivers. But Dr Farashuddin is careful to point out that merit alone does not determine eligibility. A parallel system of need-based assistance makes sure that capable students don't get pushed to the edges because they can't afford it. People who keep a certain level of academic achievement and meet certain income requirements can get ongoing help, which is often renewed in cycles so that help is not suddenly taken away.

The result is a layered model of inclusion that takes into account both achievement and circumstance. This is a very big commitment. Almost one in five students gets some kind of financial help, and the university spends a large part of its annual income—about 12 to 13 percent—on scholarships and other forms of aid.

Dr Farashuddin doesn't like the word "expenditure" here; instead, he calls it a long-term investment in people's potential. The difference is important because it changes

the story from cost to consequence and from accounting to impact.

Additionally, this system incorporates locally sensitive gestures. For example, district scholarships provide selected students from each of Bangladesh's 64 districts with complete financial support, which includes living expenses, study materials, and tuition. These programmes increase the university's reach and attract students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and geographic locations.

In actuality, this support network changes the makeup of the campus itself in addition to relieving financial strain. A gradual but significant diversification is indicated by the growing number of female students, many of whom receive scholarships by their own merit, and the involvement of students from a variety of religious and geographic backgrounds. The university's second commitment is not just to admit students but to keep them, which takes form in this interaction between presence and policy.

Beyond questions of cost and access, EWU has, over time, cultivated a reputation for "care". The university's emphasis on student well-being is woven into both its infrastructure and its everyday ethos, extending from medical facilities and emergency support to a dedicated socio-psychological counselling centre where students can seek confidential guidance. For Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, this is a responsibility. "We consider our students as our own children," he says, a sentiment reflected in moments of crisis when the campus has functioned as a place of refuge—offering shelter, treatment, and reassurance.

The same philosophy manifests in smaller interventions: counselling for those navigating family pressures, an environment deliberately kept free from partisan tensions, and a broader commitment to ensuring that students feel, above all, safe and supported. It is an approach that recognises education as an experience affected by emotional and psychological conditions.

The narrative of EWU ultimately boils down to its name: striking a balance between aspirations and access, ideals and realities. What started out as an attempt to unite two intellectual traditions has developed into something more grounded but no less ambitious: a university that aims to balance growth with integrity, ambition with care, and quality with affordability. Its growth from a small group of 20 students to a large academic community can be interpreted as an indication of the institution's success.

STUDY ABROAD

Demystifying the grad school application process

Aside from your degree and transcripts, another important document in your applications is your CV or resume. CVs are longer and more detailed and more commonly used in academically focused programmes, while resumes are more concise, usually one to two pages long, focused on quantifying your relevant working experience, and used in more professionally orientated programmes.

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

Every year, graduate programmes around the world open up applications, and thousands of prospective students pour their hearts (and wallets) out in hopes of getting in. However, there seems to be a mystique shrouding a fairly straightforward process. While grad school applications may vary according to the country, school, and degree-specific requirements, they all have a few standard components:

DEADLINES

This is arguably the easiest yet most underestimated aspect of the application process. It's best to keep in mind the specific dates and deadlines of your intended programmes to ensure you don't miss the application deadlines. Most universities have three rounds, and by rule of thumb, the earlier you apply, the less competition for seats and aid you'll face.

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS

Your transcripts are a very crucial part of the entire application process, as they give the admissions committee a window into your previous academic performance and help them gauge how you could perform in the programme. It's important to remember that institutes will ask for attested and official transcripts and certificates upon acceptance,

so it's best to plan ahead and keep these on hand as soon as you are done with your degree or are eligible to collect. While most UK and Australian programmes will accept documents outright, many US and Canadian institutes will require a credential evaluation to ensure that your degree is equivalent to a North American 4-year degree. Getting a credential evaluation is a lengthy process that may take up to a couple of months and has several logistical hurdles to overcome; thus, it's best to research if your institute requires an evaluation beforehand and get one done as early as you can.

Aside from your degree and transcripts, another important document in your applications is your CV or resume. CVs are longer and more detailed and more commonly used in academically focused programmes, while resumes are more concise, usually one to two pages long, focused on quantifying your relevant working experience, and used in more professionally orientated programmes. It's best to ensure that your CV or resume is tailored to the programme you are applying to through quantified, relevant achievements.

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE OR INTENT

Your statements of purpose/intent are the heart of your grad school application. This is the only place where you can speak to the admissions committee directly

and tell your story beyond numbers. While this is the most variable part of the application, depending on your specific degree and school, as a rule of thumb, most statements of purpose are 500-1000 words long and ask you to essentially pitch why you'd be a good candidate for the programme. It's important to tie together your personal story, background, and academic and non-academic interests into a coherent piece explaining why you want to attend (in other words, a fanfiction) that makes you

stand out to the person reading it.

And while it's okay to use AI in the drafting process, please don't outright use AI-written content in your submissions unless you want to get your application straight up thrown out. However, it is a good idea to get your essays reviewed by your peers, friends, and faculty members and take their feedback to make sure you are showing up as your most authentic self.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Many academic programmes want letters of recommendation (LOR) from individuals who can attest to your academic or industrial performance and capabilities. LORs from friends and family members are usually discouraged, and these recommendations are usually requested from someone who has managed or worked with you and can speak candidly of your performance. A common recurring theme in this article is doing your research and work beforehand, and requesting LORs is no exception to this. It's best to request someone for a recommendation a couple of months in advance and help them draft it by providing them with additional information they may not know. However, it's not a good idea to draft it for them or use AI to draft it for them. You should also be mindful of when they are due and give your referees ample time to draft and submit them within the deadline.

STANDARDISED TESTS

This is often the most dreaded hurdle to cross when applying for graduate programmes. If you're applying abroad, be prepared to sit for a standardised English language test. While IELTS remains king, TOEFL, PTE, and even the Duolingo English test have gained considerable acceptance worldwide, so you have the option of choosing the one that works best for you; just make sure it's accepted by the institute you are applying to.

On the other hand, degrees that are quantitatively rigorous will often require a GRE score to get admission, while the GMAT is more commonly used for business school and management degrees. While there are pros and cons to both, they are both tests that should not be taken lightly. As they are both difficult and expensive, they can be retaken only a certain number of times in a calendar year. A word of advice would be to research if your university has GRE or GMAT scores posted in their class profiles and to aim for the middle 80 percent scores at a minimum. There's also a plethora of free and paid prep materials available on the internet, so you get to pick your poison, but as a rule of thumb, it's best to be able to factor in retakes and dedicate two to three months of full-time study before sitting for any of these exams.

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