

## ■ CAREER ■

# How to transition from university to your professional life

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Many university students complete their degrees the same way they finished school: by showing up, studying, sitting for exams, and repeating. The wake-up call often hits in the final semester, or worse, after graduation. By then, the job market feels overwhelming, the comparison spiral kicks in, and mental health takes a hit.

While sheer luck and privilege are significant factors in post-graduation outcomes, a huge role is played by strategic execution. Proper planning doesn't mean having a five-year roadmap fresh out of high school. It means knowing yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, and your circumstances, and building yourself up to be adaptable to different careers.

**THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK ANYMORE**

Much of this can be attributed to the cultural and societal expectations of growing up in South Asia. Parents and students alike feed into the idea that completing university and holding a degree certificate alone ensures a job is handed to you. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 28 percent of the demographic was the youth in the year 2023. The oversupply of graduates relative to job creation translates to a level of competition that is easy to underestimate. Chances are, many candidates share your exact educational profile.

A degree from a brand-name university no longer offers the golden ticket in the ruthless job market of 2026. A candidate from a lesser-known institution in a small town with the right skillset and experience is just as likely to secure interviews as someone from a popular institution. That said, the playing field is not entirely even. Established pipelines from prestigious universities to local and multinational companies (MNCs) do exist, driven by alumni network biases and perceived reputation. But even those candidates have likely groomed themselves accordingly, knowing that their background has a compounding effect.

**MAKING STRATEGIC CHOICES FOR YOURSELF**

Some paths are specialised and pretty straightforward, such as medicine. For general streams,

while settling on a choice of major, most students think about either what subject they have an affinity towards or which subject has the most social value. Instead, I suggest finding out your goals and what is important to you in a career and working backwards to find the best-fit degree. Do you find purpose in solving societal and economic problems? Are you curious enough about something to dig deeper into a field than anyone ever has? Is a certain financial bracket and lifestyle important to you? Do you require clear, structured rungs that you can climb to progress your career?

It is also important to assess the market demand alignment of your chosen profession. Is this profession going to thrive or become obsolete in the near future? What are the long-term prospects? How competitive will it become by the time you graduate?

Choose your degree wisely, but remember that your choice doesn't limit your future. Career paths don't have to be linear. You are allowed to change your major if you see a better opportunity. You are allowed to use only the foundational skills your degree provides to work in a completely different industry. You are allowed to scale your hobbyist side hustles into something full-time.

**BUILDING YOUR PROFILE ONE BRICK AT A TIME**

The earlier you start, the better. The ideal time to start is the second year, once you have

found your footing and have enough time ahead to make things count. But regardless of where you are, the question is the same: are you spending your time on things that actually move the needle?

The temptation to fill free time with at-home tutoring gigs is understandable—they pay a pretty penny. But the harsh reality is that they add practically no value to your resume. Whether you want to go into academia, the corporate world or elsewhere, you have to communicate that accordingly. Just wanting something or being interested in it is not enough; your profile should be actively conveying your aspirations.

If teaching is your forte, take up teaching assistant positions at your university. If you're interested in working for MNCs, participate in business case competitions. There are many small businesses and established firms that offer part-time or voluntary positions to students, especially in customer service and digital marketing, which can offer valuable learning experiences and serve as proof of skills that employers value.

If you are unsure about your career path, explore as much as you can. Do a lot of side projects. Seek out mentorship and talk to people who do the things you want to be doing. Read, watch, and research. Become familiar with the tools, terminology, and key figures of your chosen

field. Learn the basics of resume writing, job applications, and AI for productivity, among other skills.

**STORYTELLING AS A PERSONAL BRANDING TOOL**

Another important variable enters here: personal branding. Having the relevant education, experiences, and credentials is not enough. You also need to be able to communicate and convince people why you are the right fit. In 2026, being able to market yourself is a skill not only for getting your foot in the door of a company, but also for increasing the surface area of opportunities that will find you. Learn to present, articulate clearly, make a portfolio, and use LinkedIn. From seminars, talks and online courses, there are tonnes of resources to learn from.

**KNOWING WHEN TO PIVOT**

It's important to ground yourself in reality and remember that you can get everything right and still not land your desired outcome. In that case, rethink and redirect. Your experiences don't become useless; you can always frame them in a way that suits what you are aspiring for. Bringing in different backgrounds and perspectives is actually a plus in many fields.

The aspiration to study abroad for higher education is common among incoming university students. But the reality is that it is no longer as easy as it once was. Caps on the number of international students, lack of funding, visa rejections, and geopolitical complications are increasingly frequent blockers to that dream. If it doesn't work out despite all your best efforts, you must have a backup plan to do something in Bangladesh. This is where being adaptable and pivoting come in.

Lastly, remember to explore and feed your curiosity. It's great to be strategic, but not everything you learn has to be professionally impressive. Some things are meant to simply enhance your perspective and give your personality an extra boost. At the end of the day, exposure to a multitude of activities, experiences, and transferable skills never hurt anyone. It not only helps in charting alternate pathways when your preferred goal doesn't work out but can also lead to happy accidents and careers that may not even exist yet.

**Reference:**

The Daily Star (April 9, 2023). *Youths account for 28pc of population.*



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