

Muntashir Al-Islam

A Comprehensive Guide To Pursuing

HIGHER EDUCATION ABROAD

FOR **RUETIANS**

First Edition

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For RUETians

Muntashir Al-Islam
16 Series

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A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION ABROAD (FOR RUETIANS).

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First Edition.

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- Verify the current requirements with official sources
- Seek qualified professional advice when needed
- Use this guide as a general reference only.

This guide does not constitute legal, academic, or professional advice.

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Preface

“Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast.”

— Friar Laurence, *Romeo and Juliet*

Some of you may wonder: why not make videos instead? If you do not have the patience to read, you probably do not have enough patience to pursue a higher study. In your M.S. or Ph.D., you shall have to read a lot of books and papers — some of them more thoroughly than others — to gain knowledge so that you may be able to publish some papers and write a thesis on your own. I wish there were videos for each of these books and papers, but there are almost none.

Now, let us be honest about our position as a RUETian. RUET is not the top university in Bangladesh and not a lot of people go abroad from RUET (but it has been increasing rapidly which is a positive sign). Professors in the universities abroad are more familiar with DU or BUET than other universities. So, our expectation, naturally, has to be lower than those from DU or BUET. This is specifically true for CSE because the competition has become so great that even many BUETians with a high CGPA aren't able to secure admission in the top 20 universities in the USA. But this does not mean you cannot study abroad. There are thousands of universities out there (about 4,000 in the USA alone), and being a RUETian can still be beneficial in the long run. However, if you are a good researcher or have good research potential, your institutional identity hardly matters. **It's all about your showcasing of your potential to your prospective adviser or university.**

The chapters are divided based on the timeline rather than how broad the tasks are going to be. This way, you can have a solid idea of what to expect in various stages of your persuasion of higher study. Other useful materials are provided in the appendices to avoid making the chapters unnecessarily large. It is advisable to go through all the chapters at least once before getting started. This way, you can have an idea regarding the amount of work you have to do. This may seem overwhelming at first, but you only need to follow one chapter at a time

in an actual setting. So, the admission process is not as complicated as it may seem at first look.

People say the higher study is hard, but the path to the higher study is no less hard, and as a RUETian, you are already on the right track. The purpose of this guide is to make it easy for you to follow the track.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who helped me during my Ph.D. admission that motivated me to write this guide in the first place. They include Mujtahid Al-Islam Akon, Aronno Akon (my elder brothers), Saieda Munazzima (my elder sister), Shoaib Khan, Md. Mahmudur Rahman Khan, Tomal Majumder Toushik, Amir Ahmed Asif, Md. Sozib Hossain, and Rifat Ahmed. Apart from my own experience, the guide is based on the resources provided by Mujtahid Al-Islam Akon. RUET-specific appendices were based on the instructions generously provided by Md. Mahmudur Rahman Khan. In addition, I would also like to thank every member of the NexTop USA Facebook group. Most of the Chapter 4 are based on the information obtained from the group.

This guide was made possible due to the increasing demand from my friends and juniors who want to pursue higher study abroad and regarded me as their mentor.

Academic Integrity and Legal Disclaimer

This guide is intended for educational and informational purposes only. All readers must:

- **Maintain absolute honesty** in all application materials, interviews, and documentation
- **Never falsify, alter, or misrepresent** any academic records, test scores, or personal information
- **Obtain proper authorization** for all documents and recommendations
- **Comply with all applicable laws** of Bangladesh and destination countries.

The author assumes no responsibility for any legal consequences resulting from misuse of this information. Readers are strongly advised to consult with qualified legal and academic advisors before taking any actions that may have legal implications.

Chapter 1

Decision Making and Early Preparation

You should decide on your future career by the end of the fourth semester (2-2). This is especially applicable for those who have a low CGPA (e.g., < 3.00) because 3.00 is usually the minimum CGPA in most universities. Making a decision earlier will motivate you to do better in the exams and get a good GPA. However, if you cannot improve your CGPA, there are still some options. So, I would not discourage you from starting to prepare.

If you decide to pursue higher study, you need to start preparing for it. There are several things you need to keep in mind at this stage:

1. You need an email address
2. You need to issue or renew your passport (if not already)
3. You need a dual- or multi-currency debit/credit card
4. You need to appear in a language exam (TOEFL, IELTS, Duolingo, etc.)
5. You may need to take an entrance exam (GRE, GMAT, etc.)
6. You may need to improve your GPA
7. You may need to prepare financial documents.

1.1 Creating an Email Address

An email address is a must for admission as you need it to communicate with professors and graduate coordinators as well as sit for tests and apply for a visa. Your email address should be from a usual provider (Google or Microsoft) as they are seldom filtered by automated spam filters. The address should look very professional, that is, it should con-

tain your first name or last name or both with or without uninteresting numeric values. **Do not use RUET's institutional email as it may cease to exist as soon as you graduate.**

1.2 Issuing/Renewing a Passport

Issuing or renewing a passport is very easy and can be done by yourself. Just make sure you do things properly step by step:

1. Determine the type of passport you want. I would suggest a regular 64-page passport with 10 (ten) years of validity.
2. Pay the passport fee using Automated Challan System¹
3. Fill-out the e-passport form online²
4. Within 15 days, go to the designated passport office along with the required documents³ for biometric enrollment
5. Wait for the message that says your passport is ready
6. Collect your passport from the designated passport office.

1.3 Getting a Dual- or Multi-currency Card

You need a dual- or multi-currency debit or credit card to make international transactions. However, there is a \$300 limit⁴ on each transaction. So, you will need additional permission from the bank before making a transaction over \$300. Alternatively, if you know somebody living abroad and trust them, you can ask them to pay those fees instead. In some cases, such as paying the SEVIS fees, you can also go to the bank to pay the fees.

Scam Alert!

Never trust someone you do not know if they are paying your fees with a credit card. If the fees they pay are refundable, they may refund the

¹Go to <https://ibas.finance.gov.bd/acs/general/sales> and select “পাসপোর্ট”

²<https://www.epassport.gov.bd/onboarding>

³Required documents may vary, but they are usually NID/birth certificate, student ID/NOC/GO, and SSC certificate with their photocopies.

⁴As of June 2024

amount as soon as you pay them in BDT. This has been a frequent case with SEVIS fees, for example, which are refundable.

When you open a bank account, the bank may provide you with a VISA or MasterCard debit card. In some unusual cases, such as with Dutch-Bangla Bank PLC, you may be offered an ATM/Shopping card instead which is completely useless since you cannot make online transactions with the card. Now, even if you are offered a debit card, the card may not be a dual- or multi-currency card, thus, you cannot make any international transactions with the card. So, make sure to ask your bank regarding the nature of the card that is going to be issued to you. There are some reputed banks such as Eastern Bank PLC, BRAC Bank PLC, or United Commercial Bank PLC, that offer dual-currency debit cards with a retail account. My suggestion would be to obtain a debit card from one of those banks.

Once you get a dual- or multi-currency debit card, make sure to endorse at least \$5,000 against the card. You can do this by visiting the branch where your account was opened along with the debit card and passport. Note that you can endorse a maximum of \$12,000. But you should avoid endorsing all that money to the same card since you may want to use other cards or even carry some cash dollars.

Endorsement Validity. Endorsement has a fixed validity period that varies from one bank to another. Nowadays, most banks only allow endorsing for one calendar year. Therefore, depending on your requirements, you may need to find a bank with better endorsement policy.

Getting a credit card requires either proof of income or an FDR. It usually comes with a few benefits but may have huge yearly fees. So, it is not recommended to get a credit card just for admission.

There are also dual- or multi-currency prepaid cards, but they are not recommended as they are not accepted everywhere.

1.4 Language and Entrance Exams

In most US universities, the GRE is optional for Ph.D. applicants but mandatory for M.S. So, if your target is only a Ph.D., you may not need the GRE. However, the GRE makes your profile more strong if you lack in other areas (e.g., CGPA). So, it is up to you to decide. But

in my opinion, if you have enough time and money, taking the GRE is the best approach. You can always decide not to send your GRE score to your desired university during the application. **Typically the GRE is not needed if your target countries do not include the US.**

Among the language exams, Duolingo is probably the easiest. But be aware that most universities do not accept Duolingo scores. So, to maximize your chances, it is probably better to take either TOEFL or IELTS. TOEFL has a shorter syllabus and preparation time which make it the most attractive language exam between the two. Also, in (paper-based) IELTS, you can send the scores only up to 10 universities, which may be a problem if you are planning on applying to more than 10 universities or applying on multiple sessions. So, I would recommend you take the TOEFL test if your sole target is the USA. Some universities (e.g., Rice University) also accept the Medium of Instruction (MoI) provided by RUET. But even then, applying for certain positions, such as Teaching Assistant, requires a language score. So, better be safe than sorry.

Do note that the test center for both GRE and TOEFL matters a lot. I would recommend avoiding test centers with the least reputation, such as US Software Limited unless there is no other choice.

Now, when should you start preparing for GRE and TOEFL? It depends on your English skills. But I would suggest you get a basic understanding of the syllabus and start improving your vocabulary using the Magoosh Vocabulary Flashcards app.⁵ Avoid putting too much effort into preparing for these exams as you should focus on your study. Getting a good CGPA should be your top priority because it has other benefits that you may not be aware of yet.

1.5 Preparing Financial Documents

If your target is getting a Ph.D., your university, department, or adviser will provide you with any financial support. So, you do not need to worry much about your financial standing. However, in some universities, you may have to show a financial document despite this. In my experience, you should not need to show more than \$10,000 (unless you have two or three dependants going with you). If your target is M.S., the situation is much more diverse. If you receive a fully-funded offer, you do not have to worry about anything. However, in most cases, you may need additional funds. This can be as less as \$5,000 and as much as \$90,000. So, make sure to save an amount based on your

⁵<https://gre.magoosh.com/flashcards/vocabulary>

financial capacity in a reputed bank. The amount can be stored as FDR, sanchay patra, pension, or even in a savings account. Some universities may have specific policies about it, but you do not need to worry about it until you receive an offer from them. Preparing financial documents early ensures that everything gets done smoothly and gives a clear picture of your financial capacity. If you are low on money and want to make more money through jobs, you should determine the amount of time required to save the desired amount and act accordingly. For example, if you believe that you will have a sufficient amount by July of the next year, you should apply for the fall session which usually starts in August or September.

1.6 Making a Decision

1.6.1 M.S. or Ph.D.?

While this entirely depends on you, my suggestion would be to do some study first. In many fields, securing a good job has become quite difficult. In the US, for example, getting an H1B visa has become very competitive as the number of students getting an M.S. has exceeded the number of people who can be granted an H1B visa. In the US and other Western countries, certain companies also exploit the desperation of job seekers to offer jobs that pay less but have a lot of work pressure. In these fields, you may need to return to Bangladesh after earning your M.S. degree or pursue a Ph.D. So, if your subject is one of these, you should decide whether an M.S. from abroad is worth it. If your target, on the other hand, is academia or a job requiring very specific skills, you should pursue a Ph.D (there is an exception as you will find in the next section). I have never heard of anybody involuntarily returning to Bangladesh after earning a Ph.D. degree.

1.6.2 Ivy League?

Ivy League universities require extensive research experience and/or extra- or co-curricular activities. So, unless you have some high-impact publications or participated in some renowned international competitions, your chances of getting admitted to these universities are very slim. While you may still be able to get an M.S. offer from the universities, you may not be able to bear the cost of tuition and living as they never provide any scholarships to the M.S. students. You may be able to secure an on-campus job, but the stipend will cover almost nothing. However, if you are very ambitious about getting a Ph.D. from an

Ivy League university but do not have a good profile, there may still be a way. You can pursue a thesis-based M.S. from a relatively low-rank university, especially the ones that offer scholarships. If you can publish a few papers, especially one or two high-impact papers, you may still be able to be admitted to their Ph.D. program. However, in high-rank universities, it usually takes several years more than the normative time to complete a Ph.D. Since Ph.D. life in the US is not easy, you may want to think about the potential trade-offs of following this path. You should also note that not all programs in Ivy League universities are good. For example, in Computer Security, Georgia Tech may be better than an Ivy League university as it has a higher rank and a very good reputation in this field.

1.6.3 High- or Low-rank Universities?

Other than Ivy League universities (East Coast) or UC (University of California) system (West Coast), the rank of a university does not matter much if you intend to secure a job. However, if you want to remain in academia, rank does matter. Rank selection should be based on your CGPA, research, interests, etc. You should always follow subject ranking instead of overall ranking. For example, the University of Georgia does not have a good rank in the engineering field, but it is one of the best universities in agriculture. Similarly, Georgetown is well-known for law, but its engineering departments have poor ranks. If your target is obtaining a Ph.D., you should only choose the R1 universities (unless your CGPA is very very bad).

1.6.4 Low CGPA?

If you have a very low CGPA (i.e., < 3.00) in B.Sc. and want to seek admission to the US universities, contacting professors via e-mail is the only option for you. If you apply centrally, your application will likely be rejected. However, there are ways to make a positive impression:

- Getting good scores in the language and entrance exams
- Publishing articles in good journals and conferences
- Earning an M.Sc. degree with a good CGPA (e.g., > 3.5)
- Writing an outstanding statement of purpose and good letters of recommendation.

If you have a low CGPA, you cannot get into a high-rank university. In this case, if you want to stay in the academia, you can get an M.S. from a low-rank university and then start a Ph.D. in a higher-ranked

university. This way, it is even possible to get into the Ivy League universities.

In other universities, you may be able to secure admission through an agency. But be aware of scams!

1.6.5 Where to study?

While this writing is exclusively made for the US, the instructions are more or less similar for Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and most European countries. However, the prospect of getting a good job in countries other than the US is quite low, and you are likely to lead an average life in those countries after your graduation. In some particular cases, you may even earn less than you did while you were pursuing your degree. As a result, many people I know eventually moved to the US after or without completing the degree. But I also know some people who are quite satisfied with their lives in those countries. So, I would say it is up to you to decide. But if you are unsure, you should probably try the US.

Facebook Group Suggestion

You should join the **NexTop-USA** Facebook group⁶ to make yourself familiar with the admission process and possible issues. This can be useful even if your target country is not the USA.

⁶<https://fb.com/groups/nextop.usa>

Chapter 2

The Preparation

You should start full preparation at the start of the seventh (4-1) semester or later. The exact time and date depend on several factors, such as academic pressure, availability of money, motivation, burnout, graduation time, etc. Higher study is not easy, especially, for those who are not used to living on their own. Also, depending on the situation, you may need \$5,000 or more from the university application to settling down in the USA. So, you will need some preparation. Personally, I took a break from all academic workloads, and I also needed to save some money. So, I continued my job until I had enough money and motivation to start the preparation.

The preparation stage can be divided into two independent parts:

1. Preparing for language and entrance exams
2. Preparing for university application

2.1 Preparing for Language and Entrance Exams

The preparation time depends on several factors, such as your English skills and early preparation. Here we will discuss the GRE and the TOEFL.

2.1.1 GRE

Assuming you have no formal English skills (e.g., you have a basic communication skill and cannot write a good essay in a formal tone), it may take at least six months to prepare for the GRE. Although I did do the early preparation, I did not sit for the exam. So, I obtained the guide from a senior:

You need to divide your routine into two parts: daily tasks and weekly tasks and continue until one month to the exam.

Daily tasks

1. Read at least one article, preferably a long and boring article, from an American newspaper, such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, or the Wall Street Journal. The topic could be anything, but you need to try and understand the gist of it even if you do not understand all the words. While reading the article, if you find a word that you are not familiar with, you can note it down along with its meaning.
2. Exercise comprehension from the Manhattan 5 lb book, be it just one passage and corresponding 2–3 questions. If you make a mistake, go through the solution to figure out why it was incorrect and what is the correct solution. This is very important. So, take your time while exercising comprehension. These are not as easy as those we are used to solving for exams, and sometimes, even after reading 2–3 times, the comprehension may not seem clear to you. Read again and again so that you can answer it on your own. Please do not give up very easily here.

Weekly tasks

1. Practice words from the Magoosh Vocabulary Flashcards app. Target 1,000 words from the app for 6 months. Also, revise the old words every once in a while. You may not remember many words, so do not panic.
2. Practice 4–5 sentence equivalence and text completion from the Manhattan 5 lb book. Do this only after finishing about 300 words above. Otherwise, you may become frustrated.
3. Practice maths from Nova and Manhattan 5 lb. They have practice problems sorted by topic. Tackle only one topic at a time.
4. Practice the quant sections from Manhattan 5 lb or the ETS official quant guide.

Set a target to finish all the comprehensions (reading and logic), sentence completion, and equivalence a month before the exam, then keep 2–3 days to revise the answers to those from Manhattan 5lb. The verbal part depends a lot on intuition on your behalf. Try to practice

2.1. PREPARING FOR LANGUAGE AND ENTRANCE EXAMS

as much as possible. Also, have trust in your intuition. No matter how well you prepare, you will need it in the end.

Last one month

All the comprehensions from Manhattan 5 lb should be finished by now, along with more than 500 words from Magoosh.

1. Start with a quant diagnostic test in Manhattan 5 lb and figure out which topics make you uncomfortable. Practice those topics from Manhattan 5 lb. Data interpretation and statistics seemed a little difficult to me. Focus more on the ETS official quant guide at this point.
2. Revise as many words as you can every day. Finish off as many of the practice tests from the official guides as you can. In every article, passage, or test, note down all the unfamiliar words and revise them once every day, especially, the ones from the official guides.
3. Four weeks is enough for essays. The idea is to go through the sample essays in the official books.
4. Take a practice test every week. Start with Barrons or Kaplan or Manhattan's test. Sit for Powerprep 10 days and 3 days before the exam. You could also take another test between them. Do not skip any sections in the practice tests, not even the essays.

GRE Resources

GRE resources are available in the **NexTop-USA** group.¹

2.1.2 TOEFL

TOEFL² is easier than the GRE as it is only a language test and should not take more than two weeks of practice and strategy building. However, note that the TOEFL syllabus has changed in July 2023.³ So, be sure to practice for the new syllabus while following the guide below:

¹<https://fb.com/groups/nextop.usa>

²<https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/about.html>

³<https://www.toeflresources.com/blog/major-changes-coming-to-the-toefl-ibt-shorter-test-fewer-questions/>

KMF

KMF⁴ should be your primary resource for practice. The practice section here looks exactly like the one you see in the official test center. So, it is very helpful. But you may need to use your Browser's inspection tool to delete the "locked" warnings and Google Translate to translate the texts (as they are in Chinese). You may need to create an account here as well. The good thing is that you get an evaluation for listening and reading parts for free. The other two (writing and speaking) require an AI/manual process which is not free, but you can still check what you write and listen to what you say for your review. They may also help.

Inside the TOEFL Test Playlist

This YouTube playlist⁵ is from TOEFL's official channel and should be your primary resource for knowledge and strategy building. The videos are short and informative. Make sure to watch them carefully and take notes like you do in a classroom.

TOEFL Resources YouTube Channel

This YouTube channel⁶ is quite good for strategy building in order to manage time. I watched a few videos from this channel to get an understanding of the new writing task introduced in July 2023.

NoteFull YouTube Channel

Watch all TOEFL-related videos from the playlists of this channel⁷. The playlists are not very large and take only an hour or so. This is *optional* for those who are already proficient in English.

In my experience, in an actual exam setting, it may be difficult to jump-start the exam since everything happens so fast. So, practice as much as you can. Also, make sure to review your notes and practice speaking before going to the exam center. Avoid getting too excited, keep yourself as calm as possible.

In both GRE and TOEFL, you can send scores for free to at most 4 (four) universities. However, for TOEFL, you must add these universities the day before you sit for the exam. So, it is a good idea to decide on

⁴<https://toefl.kmf.com/>

⁵<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL499345C34BF71B4C>

⁶<https://www.youtube.com/@Toeflresources>

⁷<https://www.youtube.com/@NoteFullTOEFLMastery/playlists>

the universities early. Say you are targeting the next fall. You should decide at least four universities by October and sit for the exam at the end of October or at the beginning of November. This way, you can take another exam in case you do not get a good score and still apply within the priority deadline which is usually mid-December.

2.2 Preparing for University Application

This part is divided into several sections:

1. Topic selection and profile evaluation
2. University selection
3. Contacting prospective advisers
4. Writing a statement of purpose
5. Preparing the letters of recommendation
6. Obtaining and evaluating academic transcript.

2.2.1 Topic Selection and Profile Evaluation

The best way to get started with topic selection is by creating a research profile and a CV. Because they help *you* understand your profile better. You can, at first, leave out the research interests part if you cannot decide a topic.

Example Research Profile and CV

I linked my old CV and public profile below as examples. Your profile and CV should be quite similar (but not the same, of course!).

My research profile: <https://sites.google.com/view/muntashir-old>

My CV: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/150f9xTHtM58zSDns0HiP0aq2qCjk3ZhI/view>

Things to remember while creating a CV:

- It must not exceed two pages (unless you have, say, 10–15 papers)
- References should be academicians (even if your boss works at Google)
- Avoid adding your photo (no one is interested in how you look)
- Essential links should not be present as hyperlinks (e.g., avoid putting the link to your LinkedIn profile under the text “LinkedIn”)

- Highlight interesting achievements and awards if they are related to your project or research (magenta or red is usually used in this context).

Topic Selection

After creating a research profile, you can proceed to topic selection if you have not already. There are a few things you need to keep in mind while selecting a topic:

- You should only pick a topic that you feel comfortable with. Avoid choosing a topic just because it is currently popular. Such hypes come and go all the time, but the topic you choose will affect you for the rest of your life. For example, AI/ML has become very popular and a lot of professors are doing research on it. But it does not mean that you should choose it. Make sure you actually like working on the topic.
- The initial selection of topics should be made from the topics that interested you during your B.Sc. or M.Sc. Your particular grade on the topic does not matter here. You can choose whatever you like the most. Then, visit the faculty list in a few universities to find faculty members doing research on these topics. Read the abstract (and optionally, the introduction) of a few *recent* papers written by them to see if you find any one of them interesting. You do not have to understand the paper, just check if the topic looks interesting. In addition or as an alternative, you can also look up those topics on the Internet, or ask ChatGPT (and the like) as well as somebody you know to improve your understanding. For example, you may be interested in transportation (CE), pyrolysis (ME), or cryptography (CSE). Do some study on the topic to get some ideas about the ongoing research.
- (For CS and related fields only.) If you do not already have a topic, you can find a list of topics at CSRankings⁸. In case you encounter an unknown topic, do a little study on it (who knows it could be the topic that you were looking for!). To do so, turn off all the topics except the ones that interest you. Then on the right-hand side, click on a university name to find the list of professors who do research on the topic. Click on the professor's name to go to their website, and on the website, find one or two *recent* papers on the topic and read the abstract and a few other sections

⁸<https://csrankings.org/>

(introduction, conclusion, etc.) to get an idea of the topic. If it looks interesting, you should select it.

- If you have chosen one (or more) topic or already have a topic in mind, try to find a few more related topics as well. For example, if your selected topic is cryptography, you can consider computer security and network security as well. To find related topics, you can look up the topics online, ask ChatGPT, etc.
- Make a shortlist consisting of at most 4 (four) topics. The topics do not have to be related. However, if the topics are related, it may be easier for you to write a statement of purpose that applies to all of them. Here are a few things to keep in mind while making a shortlist:
 1. There is a trade-off between rank and hype. For topics with too much hype, there is a high chance of not getting offers from higher-ranked universities. This is why you see many BUETians with high CGPAs settling for lower-ranking universities.
 2. There is also a trade-off between funding and hype. Overly hyped topics usually have more funding and more faculty members than the others. Less-known topics have fewer faculty members, and graduate programs may only be offered in higher-ranked universities. But they also have less number of applicants.
 3. You can also discuss with seniors or friends doing graduate studies regarding the prospect of a topic. But be aware of any potential bias.

Ideally, you should look for a moderately hyped topic as they have sufficient funding and it is quite possible to secure admission to a higher-ranked university.

Profile Evaluation

Evaluating a profile can be complicated as the process is very much non-deterministic and depends on a lot of external factors. What I have written here is based on what I have experienced and learned from others:

CGPA. CGPA is one of the most important factors in your application. Having a good CGPA will make your application stand

out. In top-ranked universities and in universities where you are going to apply centrally (i.e., without contacting a professor first), CGPA is the first factor by which an admission decision is made. Consequently, it plays a big role in university selection. In addition, you may also be offered a fellowship if you have a very high CGPA.

University Rank. RUET is not as popular as DU or BUET. From what I learned, RUET is considered next to DU and BUET in some universities. So, during admission, you need to compete with thousands of IIT graduates, Chinese students, international students who graduated from a US university, visiting scholars and exchange students, DU graduates, and BUETians. Besides, BUET is well-known among the professors, which naturally makes them biased towards the BUETians. So, RUETians are not in a favorable position in this regard.

GRE Score. Like CGPA, the GRE score acts as a threshold. However, unlike CGPA, having an outstanding GRE score seldom matters. You only need to pass the threshold to be considered for the next set of evaluations. In most universities, the threshold is 310, but they have separate thresholds for Quant and Verbal sections (usually between 140–160 range). You may also be considered for additional scholarship/fellowship based on the AWA score (which is usually 4.0 or more).

Language Score. The language requirement is similar to GRE, that is, passing the threshold should be enough for you. However, higher-ranked universities may require a higher score. The median score is usually 88 (TOEFL) or 6.5 (IELTS). But you should get at least 100 (TOEFL) or 7.0 (IELTS) just to be on the safe side. In addition, make sure you get 23 or more (TOEFL), or 7.0 or more (IELTS) in the speaking section. Otherwise, you may need to take additional courses or examinations during or before the first semester to be qualified for a teaching assistant position.

Research Experience. If you are an undergraduate student, you are NOT required to have any research experience at all. However, having some research experiences will boost your profile, even if they are unrelated to the field you are applying to. This is especially true for higher-ranked universities and popular topics since admission is very competitive. Having a few publications or ongoing works is also helpful to support your case. If you are

trying to get into a high-ranked university, you should have at least one paper in a good journal or conference. Publication also helps you compensate for any other shortcomings you may have in other areas.

Statement of Purpose. SoP is one of the documents that the admissions committee always reads. So, make sure it contains everything that supports your application. This includes your interests, current work or research, past education or research, future goals, reasons for applying to this university, and so on. However, you should highlight your strongest point among them. SoP is not the same as the personal statement. So, avoid writing your life story here. Also, avoid rewriting the things that are already in your CV or personal statement (if you submitted one). SoPs are usually very compact. Therefore, adding this information would be a waste of the precious space.

Letter of Recommendation. LoRs can have a significant impact on your application if they contain a description of your qualities and potential as a student and a researcher. LoRs are usually optional for the M.S. program. But if you have any shortcomings, you should submit a few LoRs to strengthen your profile.

2.2.2 University Selection

Based on your profile, you need to list the target universities first. You do not need to be quite thorough about it though. A quick way to do this is to sort the universities by the subject rank using a reputed provider, such as Times Higher Education, US News (US only), or CSRankings (CS and related fields only). However, you should keep the following factors in mind:

University Rank. As mentioned in the previous section, university rank does not have an impact on your future unless in the stated cases. However, it may be necessary for you to increase your chances of admission as well as get an understanding of your position to prevent having a high or low expectation. Both can cause serious depression as time progresses. Therefore, you should start by choosing the range of universities that serve your position. You can use the information given in the previous section to get an idea of your position.

Program Requirements. Program requirements include CGPA, language score, GRE, M.S. (for Ph.D. admission), etc. For example,

if your CGPA is less than the program requirement, you are already ineligible. So, there is no point in putting the university on your list. Similarly, if you do not plan on taking a GRE test, you need to exclude a university that has no GRE waiver policy. Do note that these are program requirements, not university requirements. So, make sure to check the particular department website instead of the graduate website.

Exceptions.

In some departments, some of these requirements may be waived based on the recommendations from your prospective advisor. But they are not usually documented anywhere. So, if your field is relatively small, you may still consider contacting the professors from those universities.

Funding Situation. For higher study, funding can be a very important factor unless, say, your father is a millionaire. If your target is M.S., you may want to check if the university provides funding for the M.S. students. Unfortunately, most top-ranked universities focus on research, consequently, they do not provide any funding for M.S. However, funding is more or less confirmed in universities where research is not a priority. For Ph.D., it is unwise to get admitted without guaranteed funding even if you have a lot of money. To get an idea of funding, you can check the profile of the professors in your desired field or department. They usually write about the funding or grants on their website. You can also check the recent research activities or seek advice from the running graduate students.

Application Deadline. You need to check if you can apply to the university by the deadline. In some universities, there are two deadlines: priority and regular. In those cases, you may need to apply by the priority deadline to secure funding. It is better if you can note this down along with the name of the university for easy access.

Acceptance Rate. While acceptance rate is very important for undergraduate study, it does not have any importance in higher study. The only thing that you need to check is if the university admits any international students at all, which should be true for most universities.

Application Fee Waivers. Some universities provide an option to waive your application fee⁹ if you attend a few of their programs or show proof of financial shortcomings. Depending on the number of universities you are going to apply, you may need a lot of money just to apply. So, getting as many waivers as possible would be useful for you. If you are not financially sound, you should start keeping track of this very early as some universities (e.g., Purdue University) may offer waivers as soon as they open the admission portal and close when the quota is filled. Certain scholarship programs, such as Erasmus or Turkey, also do not require an application fee. But whatever you do, **do not delist a university just because it does not offer an application fee waiver.**

2.2.3 Contacting Prospective Advisers

M.S. Students.

If you are pursuing a non-thesis option, reaching out to professors for funding is probably pointless. Because professors usually support you through teaching or research assistantship which they will only grant to those with the thesis option. Instead, you should plan on doing an on-campus job or pursuing internships from the start.

After selecting the universities, you should start contacting the professors in order to find any potential research opportunities with them. You should only contact the professors via email (but some professors also allow Twitter DMs). However, Facebook and LinkedIn can be great places to find professors who are recruiting graduate students. It is also possible to open a window for the professors to contact you by sharing your GRE/TOEFL scores on the ETS website. But this is only applicable to those with a good score. To sum up, there are several ways to find the professors in your field:

- Listing them from the faculty members (or a similar) section of the university or department website. While listing the faculty members, make sure they do any research. Typically, lecturers and teaching professors do not do any research. Some tenured professors also do not publish regularly as they focus on other things, such as startups.

⁹You can find an incomplete list of universities offering application fee waivers here: <https://inform.ng/application-fee-waivers>

- Following certain keywords in LinkedIn to find the professors looking for graduate students.
- Following certain Facebook groups (such as NexTop-USA) where graduate student recruitment notices are posted by the members (usually taken from the same notices found on LinkedIn).
- By sharing your GRE/TOEFL score on the ETS website.

In addition, some researchers or communities maintain a list of professors who publish in the field in order of the number of publications or research impact. For CS students, CSRankings.org offers such a list. Also, the list should include professors from your areas of interest as well as related areas if the areas you have selected are very specific and small.

Once you start making a list, you can also begin sending emails instead of completing the list first. But whatever you do, **never send bulk emails to the professors**. Certain parts of the email (such as the subject, the name of the professor, or their lab) should always be curated. In addition, all communications with faculty members should be honest and professional. Never misrepresent your qualifications, experience, or intentions.

Mail versus Email

In US English, mailing usually means sending somebody something via the postal service whereas emailing means sending somebody something electronically via an email service. So, make sure to use the correct word to avoid confusion.

There are two types of email:

Generic. Generic emails follow a common format. That is, you use a common email template and send it to multiple professors by modifying one or two places of the template. This type of email can be quite effective if your profile is moderate and you want to reach as many professors as you can. In a generic email, you usually describe your research interest, your past and present research (regardless of their relevance), relevant skills, and your academic profile. That is, you attempt to prove to the professor that you have good research potential.

Specific. While specific emails follow a common pattern, parts of the email have to be altered based on the research done by the professor and your particular interest. This type of email can be useful

for those with a good research profile and have very specific research interests. In such an email, you usually describe how your research is relevant to one of the research currently being done by the professor. This you do by describing one of your past or present *relevant* works along with one or two recent papers published by the professor. Since reading papers published by a professor is a tedious job, sending such curated emails can significantly slow you down. There is also a possibility of the professor never replying to your email in which case, all your efforts will be in vain. So, before sending such a specific email, it is a good idea to visit the professor's personal website to find out if they are currently recruiting any graduate students.

The format of each type of email is listed in Appendix A. However, regardless of the email contents, the subject of the email should be *specific*. That is, you should write something like "Prospective Ph.D. student interested in [topic name]" instead of just "Prospective Ph.D. student". This not only saves you from any automated spam filters but also makes your email more appealing to the professor. In some cases, the professor may have written specific instructions regarding the subject of the email. For example, a professor from the University of California specifically asked each prospective student to prefix "[Hogwarts 2.0]" in the email subject. Therefore, it is advisable to go through the professor's personal website before sending any emails.

When to start emailing?

You can start as soon as you have prepared an email template and listed at least a few professors. Sending emails early (as early as a year ahead of the application date) may create an opportunity to collaborate with the professor or for early recruitment. However, in case you are on a tight schedule, the ideal time to start emailing would be September and October if you want to catch the next Fall/Autumn since the early application deadline in most universities is mid-December to January.

When to send emails?

The ideal time for sending emails is at 7:5x AM depending on the time-zone of the university. Because this is when a professor usually opens their mailbox which increases the possibility of finding your email on the top of the list. Most professors also never do any academic works on the weekends. So, avoid sending emails on Saturdays and Sundays.

Make sure to check the timezone of the university, the US alone has at least six timezones.

What if a professor never replies?

If a week has passed and you have not received any reply from a professor, you can send them a reminder email. There are two ways you can send a reminder email: 1. sending the same email once again, 2. replying to the old email with a message (e.g. “Just to remind you that I sent an email [a few days] ago.”). The latter is preferable as it does not spam the mailbox. You can send a reminder every week until the professor acknowledges, that is, makes a reply. It may seem pointless at first, but you will understand the importance of sending reminders once you start getting replies from those reminders. The ideal time for sending a reminder email is at 7:5x AM on Monday (university timezone).

Positive, generic, or negative reply?

A negative reply is often very straightforward (e.g. “Sorry, I will not take new students this year.”). The confusion occurs when you get a reply that appears to be positive. A reply is said to be positive if it mentions something positive about your profile or email. For example, a professor may want to schedule one or more interviews or give additional tasks such as reading one or two of his papers and summarising them, etc. A reply is said to be generic if it contains nothing about your profile or email but contents that can be sent to virtually anybody. Like you, a professor may also keep a template that they use to reply to students. This is usually done by a professor who is not actively looking for graduate students or has found your profile unsatisfactory but still does not want to discourage you from applying, or simply wants to be polite. However, if you have a particularly strong profile and/or have the money to pay the application fee, some generic emails may be counted towards the positive. But it is still better to avoid them if you have already got a few positive replies.

You may get more generic or negative replies than positive replies if you do not have an excellent profile. So, it may become quite depressing at first. My suggestion would be to develop the habit of accepting rejections. It will also be very beneficial in the future. In addition, do not forget to thank the professor for their reply regardless of the nature of the reply.

How to attend a Zoom call?

In many cases, a professor may want to schedule an interview with you to get an idea of your capabilities. Depending on the professor and the subject, the style of the interview varies. Firstly and most frequently, the interview can be one-on-one, that is, only you and the professor will be the participants. Secondly and less frequently, the interview will be one-to-many, that is, you, the professor and his lab members will be the participants. Similarly, it can be formal or informal. Usually, the one-on-one meetings are informal and focused on getting to know you on a personal level through questionnaires. In one-to-many meetings, you are usually expected to present yourself and your work in a formal setting by creating presentable slides. After that, the professor and his lab members may ask questions regarding your presentation. Most professors will inform you how they may arrange the interview beforehand. So, you should not worry about it much. After you finish answering their questions, you should also ask questions regarding the lab environment, funding, expectations, etc. You should also carefully note everything down for future reference. Interview is a very broad topic and deserves a section of its own which will be added at a later revision.

When to stop emailing?

A verbal confirmation from a professor does not guarantee admission whereas a written confirmation might. However, there are still chances that your application may be rejected by the graduate school due to other shortcomings unknown to the professor. So, you should stop sending emails only after you receive an official offer of admission from the graduate school.

How to keep track of the emails?

It may be very difficult to keep track of emails as you may be sending five to ten emails everyday. I suggest you label each email using the *label* feature in your mailbox like in Figure 2.1.

2.2.4 Writing a Statement of Purpose

As soon as you have selected a topic and evaluated your profile, you should start writing a statement of purpose (SoP). In many universities, it has to be under two pages or 1,000 words. In a few other universities, it has to be under 3,000 characters (roughly one page). Therefore,

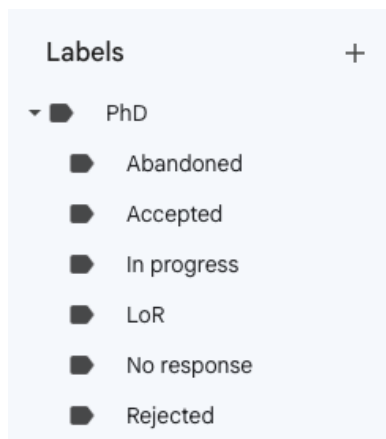


Figure 2.1: Labeling emails for the Ph.D. using Gmail. Each Ph.D.-related emails were added “PhD” and one of the five labels. The “LoR” label is for those who would be submitting the letters of recommendation.

starting early can be beneficial as you will get enough time to curate it. In addition to SoP, you may also need to write a personal statement (or, personal history statement) and a diversity statement. The latter documents usually do not bear the same importance as an SoP and will be covered in a future revision.

To write an SoP, it is necessary, at first, to know what it should contain. An SoP is not a personal statement, that is, it should not contain your personal history. Instead, it should contain your research interests (for researchers) and future goals with supporting evidence and the reason for choosing the university or department in a very straightforward way. There are no hard and fast rules for writing an SoP, and many templates are already available online. However, my suggestion would be writing an SoP on your own based on your own experience. Although it is not a personal history statement, it has to be curated in a way that looks like you are telling a story. Try to avoid complex sentences, and be careful about your choice of words. As you may be preparing for the GRE and a language exam, you are likely to choose more complex words. Here is an outline of how an SoP should be written, but as I said, there are no hard and fast rules. Each situation is unique, and the advices should not be taken for granted.

First paragraph: Introduction. The very first paragraph should demon-

strate your research interests and/or future goals along with your motivation. This makes it easy for the admission committee to decide your area of interest and sort your application accordingly. To write an introduction, try to answer these questions: What are your research interests/future goals? When did you realize your interest in this area? What made you interested in this area? Have you made or are you currently making any contribution to this area? Who will benefit from this research?

Second paragraph: Justification. You need to justify everything you said in your first paragraph. You can do this by expanding your motivation to include historical facts, academic qualifications (may include coursework), research experience, teaching experience, industry experience, voluntary experience, and so on. It should not only demonstrate your motivation or experiences in the area but also your relevant skills, work ethics, etc. required for the program or the area. After reading this paragraph, the admission committee should be able to get an idea of your skills and dedication to decide whether you are suitable for the program. If the SoP allows more words/characters, you may also divide it into several (up to five) paragraphs to elaborate each contribution separately.

Third paragraph: Technical Details. (Optional) If you have broad knowledge about your interests, you can describe them in this paragraph. Note that you are doing this to attract certain faculty members. So, you should have some understanding of what they ask from you and write accordingly. Examples include research questions, future goals, more specific interests in your area of interest, and so on. You can also include or reiterate your specific skills for them as well. While this will demonstrate your eagerness to join the program, this may have some risks associated with it, especially when you do not know if the faculty members you are interested in are taking students for the session or not. This paragraph will only be skimmed over by the admission committee as they recognize the real recipient of this paragraph to be a faculty member.

Fourth paragraph: Scope. (Optional) In this paragraph, you should include the scope of your research, or for the M.S. students, the scope of your degree. That is, you need to provide evidence that this research area has some real-life impacts. You can also include what you are going to do with the research outcomes or

where they might be used if it is successful. This paragraph is important if you are going to be funded centrally, but optional if you are being recruited by a faculty (they are already fully aware of the impacts). You can also insert a more general representation in one of the other paragraphs if you are unsure about the research you will be doing.

Fifth paragraph: Defending Study Gap. (Optional) If you have more than a year of study gap, you should include a paragraph to defend your sudden persuasion of graduate study. For M.S. students, this could be related to enhancing knowledge in a certain topic or fulfilling a requirement. For Ph.D. students, it could be due to the additional time required to complete your undergraduate research, your change of perception, or fulfilling your dreams. If you have not included any technical details, you can also have them included here to support your case. If demonstrated properly, this may be a major contributing factor in your admission decision. If the admission portal has the option to upload a personal statement, make sure to reiterate this in a more detailed fashion there.

Sixth paragraph: Why This University/Program. You need to show why you chose this university and program. Simply speaking, you need to praise the university and the program. You can mention that the university is well-known for quality education and research opportunities/creating industry opportunities and that the department has excellent faculty members, research facilities, and interdisciplinary programs and institutes along with the name of the professors you are interested in working with. If you were interviewed by a professor, you could also briefly explain any positive remarks the professor had made about you. Mentioning the desired faculty members makes it easy for the admission committee to send your application to them. This also demonstrates your eagerness to get admitted to the program. If you do not have enough space, you can also merge it with the last paragraph.

Seventh paragraph: Future Plan and Conclusion. You need to state your plan, reiterate your eagerness to get admitted to the program along with your justification (that is, why you think you are qualified for it, and how it will be beneficial for you, the program, and the university), and conclude with thanks.

2.2.5 Preparing the Letters of Recommendation

Depending on the program or degree, you may need at least two or three letters of recommendation (LoR). In some M.S. programs, LoRs are completely optional. However, unless the letters are very good, you should only submit the required number of LoRs. In many cases, recommenders may request that you prepare a draft of the letter of recommendation for their review and approval. Like an SoP, LoRs play an important role in your admission. So, you should also start writing them early. But even before that, you need to select your recommenders and get a confirmation from them. In most cases, the recommenders themselves have to submit the LoRs which some of them may not want to do. So, make sure to get consent from them before start writing LoRs for them. You can approach a recommender either via email or face-to-face.

LoR Authenticity Disclaimer.

Any letter of recommendation (LoR) must be genuinely authored or explicitly approved by the stated recommender. The recommender must review, approve, and submit the letter themselves. Submitting letters without proper authorization from the recommender constitutes academic fraud and can result in serious consequences including application rejection, admission revocation, and permanent academic black-listing.

Contacting a Faculty Member at RUET via Email?

Unfortunately, many faculty members do not use their university-provided email addresses regularly. So, make sure to send emails to their active email addresses to receive a quick response. After adding a faculty member as a recommender, make sure to inform him/her about it by contacting them via cell phone or their active email address.

Who should be your recommenders?

The choice of a recommender depends on several criteria:

Profession. A recommender can be a faculty member at RUET or your current institution, a researcher with whom you have done research in the past, or your employer. However, not all universities accept recommendations from an employer. So, it is probably

better to have alternative recommenders for them. You also need to ensure that the recommender has no conflict of interest, such as your direct relative or applying to the same program in the same year.

Qualification. A recommender with a Ph.D. degree is preferred for Ph.D. as well as thesis-based M.S. admission. But this is not a hard requirement. The quality of LoR supersedes the degree of the recommender. So, make sure to select a recommender for whom you can write a good LoR.

Relation. The recommender can be anyone who knows about your research capabilities or potential as a graduate student. Except for non-thesis M.S., it is recommended to find recommenders who have done some research with you. This includes your thesis supervisor, any faculty members, people with whom you published papers, and so on. Then, you can also find faculty members who know you in some other way (e.g., took some courses, sessionals) as well as your employer. The latter can write about your qualities, such as work ethic, skills, or sense of responsibility.

Impact. A recommender with a high research impact is preferable, because the university may look at the credentials of the recommender. An ideal recommender is a faculty member who is an alumnus of the university you are applying to. If you cannot find any, you can also consider the ones who frequently provide recommendations to the students as they might be familiar to the university admissions committee or the faculty members you address in your SoP. Otherwise, choose a recommender who can talk about your research experiences to enrich the content of the LoR.

Availability. During the admission time, a faculty member may have to submit more than a hundred submissions as each student applies to several universities at a time. So, it is necessary to contact the recommender at least two months before the admission deadline to obtain their consent. Most recommenders who know you or worked with you will be happy to submit LoRs if there is no conflict of interest. Universities usually give a few weeks to several months to submit an LoR. So, you need to make sure that the recommender is available during that time.

In Short of Recommenders?

Try to find faculty members from your university with whom you can do research or projects. Contact the faculty members who took your classes in the past and establish a good relationship with them. You can also seek advice from batch mates, juniors, or seniors who took recommendations from the faculty members in the past.

What should the LoRs contain?

The LoR should show your potential as a researcher or as a graduate student. Typically, you have to write the LoRs yourself, which is problematic because it is difficult to judge your abilities on your own. Most students do this by looking at the LoR samples and/or writing about positive experiences recommenders have with you. Many students make the mistake of only including their qualities. You also need to provide sufficient examples to defend your qualities. Like an SoP, make sure to look for grammatical issues and word choices in the LoRs.

- If the recommender is your thesis supervisor or a professor with whom you have done research, write about your thesis or research, the things you have contributed, any novel idea that you may have suggested, and your implementation. If you can think of a particular incident where you tackled a problem, include it as well. Also, include a paragraph about your work ethics, such as punctuality, dedication, maintaining deadlines, etc.
- If the recommender is a researcher in a university or company, or a colleague in your university with whom you have done research, follow the previous point.
- If the recommender is a professor who has supervised you in lab projects, discuss the projects in detail: what you did in the projects, how dedicated you were, and any special feature you implemented in your project. Also, include a paragraph about your work ethics like above.
- If the recommender is a professor who instructed you in theory courses, include your grade in the courses. Write only the positive qualities about you based on your grades. Try to discuss how dedicated and responsive you were and how well you grasped the topics (include the topic names as well).

- If the recommender is your employer in a company, discuss the projects you have worked on and how well you performed in addition to your work ethic.
- If the recommender is the departmental head or the dean in your faculty with whom you never did any research, discuss your activities in the department or club and your work ethic.

Unlike an SoP or a personal history statement, there is usually no word or character limit for a LoR. However, it is better to keep it concise. It is also recommended that you write it on your institution's pad, that is, there should be a header (and optionally, a footer) with your institution and department's name on it.

Weight of an LoR.

The weight of an LoR depends on two things:

1. Popularity of the recommender in the intended university, and
2. Content of the LoR.

2.2.6 Obtaining and Evaluating Academic Transcript

Some universities may require you to mail the official transcripts during the application process or after confirming admission. For those cases, you need to obtain official transcripts from the universities you attended. Official transcripts are simply the certified photocopies of the transcripts you receive during or after completing your degrees. In addition to transcripts, you may also need to include your degree certificates. In most cases, the degree certificate has to be the original certificate (and not a provisional certificate) if the date of passing crosses a year. The process to obtain official transcripts is described in Appendix D, and the process to withdraw the original certificate (if you have not attended a convocation) is described in Appendix C.

Mailing the Official Transcripts?

Most universities will ask you to upload an unofficial scanned copy of your transcripts and require the official transcripts after admission. If that is the case, you can also ask the graduate division to extend the deadline for submitting the official transcript so that you can submit it in person when you travel there. However, a few universities do

require you to mail the official transcripts during application or admission. You can mail the official transcript using an international courier service, such as FedEx. There are also some cheaper alternatives for students, but they may take more than three days to deliver them.

In some programs in the US and Canada, especially in the biology and M.S. programs, you may need to evaluate your transcript using a credential evaluation service, such as World Education Services (WES)¹⁰, Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)¹¹, SpanTran¹². The choice of the evaluator depends on several factors:

University Requirements. Most universities have specific requirements as they may have partnered with one or more of the credential evaluation services. Course-by-course evaluation (as opposed to document-by-document evaluation) may be required by some universities as well.

GPA. Credential evaluation affects your cumulative GPA. If you have multiple options, be sure to check the final GPA using the tools provided by the services before proceeding further.

Budget. Some services cost more than others.

User Reviews. Check the reviews of each service to decide the quality of service. This is especially important if you are running out of time, because some services may take several weeks to process your transcripts.

To evaluate your transcripts, you need to obtain official transcripts along with the degree certificate and send them to your chosen service.

In Europe, you may be required to authenticate your transcripts and certificates. To do this, you need to contact the register or the education division of RUET.¹³

The detailed process of transcript evaluation and authentication will be added in a future revision.

¹⁰wes.org

¹¹ece.org

¹²spantran.com

¹³<https://www.ruet.ac.bd/page/transcript-and-degree-certificate>

Chapter 3

Application and Admission

Once you receive one or more positive responses from the professors, you can immediately start the application process. Most universities offer an application portal where you can apply yourself. The process is fairly simple if you prepare the required documents in time. Avoid seeking help from agencies as they may make mistakes and/or provide false information. After the application has been submitted, you can inform your prospective advisor along with the application ID (if any) and wait for a decision, either from the professor or from the graduate school, or both. Once you get an offer of admission, you need to either accept or decline it within a given period (which is usually April 15 in the USA for the Fall applicants). After you confirm your admission and receive a congratulations email, the admission process is finished, and you can move to the next chapter.

3.1 Applying to the Graduate Programs

This part is divided into several sections:

1. Selecting the universities where you are going to apply
2. Arranging the documents required by the university
3. Filling out the application forms
4. Contacting the recommenders to submit their letters of recommendation
5. Sending exam scores (GRE, TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo)
6. Submitting the application forms
7. Paying the application fees
8. Waiting for the admission decision from the university

3.1.1 Selecting Universities or Scholarships

Based on the responses from the professors and your expectations, you should select universities or scholarships to apply to. The process is gradual, that is, you select universities as you receive positive replies from the professors or your expectations are matched (that is, you are applying centrally). So, at first, there is no way to tell how many universities you are going to apply to. It is, however, a good idea to keep track of the universities or scholarships using a spreadsheet.

While selecting universities, only pay attention to the requirements of the university or the program, and not the application fee even if you have financial difficulties and cannot manage a waiver.

3.1.2 Arranging the Required Documents

You should prepare the following documents for each university or program you are going to apply to:

1. Scanned academic transcript along with the provisional or original certificate. Both of them should be in a single PDF with a size of less than 5MB.
2. Your two-page curriculum vitae
3. Statement of purpose (SoP)
4. At least three letters of recommendation (LoRs) to be submitted by the recommenders
5. Personal statement or personal history statement (if required)
6. A published paper or a thesis chapter as a writing sample (if required)
7. Diversity statement (if required)
8. A research proposal (if required)
9. A project description (if required)
10. Bank statement (if required)

In most cases, you may not be required to submit the last five items. So, you should prepare these documents only if they are required in the admission portal. As you shall see later, most of the documents are mere formalities if you are being admitted by a professor.

Additionally, you will need the following information:

- Your details, including employment history
- Details of your recommenders, including their full names, designations, university/company, phone numbers, email addresses
- List of awards and achievements
- List of publications made by you.

Most of this information should readily be available in your CV.

3.1.3 Filling-out the Application Forms

Most universities or scholarship programs offer an application portal where you need to create an account with your email and a password before you can open an application. In a few small cases, the admission might be done by the professor or graduate coordinator in which case you need to contact them for the required documents. Since the latter is very straightforward, we are only going to talk about the former.

Finding the Application Portal

The location of the application portal depends on the policy of the individual department. If the admission is handled by the department, the department may provide a separate application portal for the graduate program. In case of a scholarship, you may have to apply through a dedicated scholarship portal. So, make sure to use the correct application portal or your application may not be evaluated.

The application form usually consists of several pages, and the portal usually allows you to save all the past pages before moving to the next. So, you only need to ensure that you are saving what you are filling out. If you have already gathered all the information required by the program as we discussed in the previous section, filling out the form should be very straightforward. However, in a few cases, you may face some difficulty.

On-campus or off-campus housing. It varies from location to location.

I suggest contacting your prospective advisor or one of the graduate students to get some ideas. In expensive areas, on-campus housing may be the cheaper option, but you may be stuck on the waiting list for a long time due to a lot of applicants.

Disciplinary action taken by the university. If you have received an X grade due to copying in the examination or on-campus violation in your previous institution, you should report it only if it is specified in the testimonial or any other document.

Whether your application should be considered for M.S. If you are applying for a Ph.D., you may get this prompt. There is no correct answer to this question. You can choose whatever you want.

Majors and minors. Major subjects are the same ones specified in your degree name. For example, if you graduated with a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering, your major is Mechanical Engineering. We do not usually have any minor subjects in Bangladesh.

GPA calculation. In some cases, you may be asked to provide the GPA of the junior and senior year instead of the GPA for 4-year bachelor course. If that is the case, you need to calculate your GPA for the last two years using your academic transcript. The equation to calculate the GPA is as follows:

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\sum_{i=\text{Each course}} \text{GPA}_i \times \text{Course Credit}_i}{\sum_{i=\text{Each course}} \text{Course Credit}_i} \quad (3.1)$$

Recommendation access waiver. In the admission portal of the US universities, while inserting the information of the recommenders, you may be asked whether to waive the rights to access the recommendation made by the recommender. You should always choose “Yes”.

Q&A instead of an SoP. In some universities (e.g., Georgia Tech), you may be asked to answer a few questions instead of submitting an SoP. In most cases, you can simply copy the relevant section from the SoP, and modify it a bit to suit the needs.

Asking for teaching experience. Some universities (e.g., Princeton) may ask for teaching experiences if you have any. Even if you take classes in a coaching center, you can include that in the corresponding essay.

Asking for course history. In some cases (e.g., Purdue University), you may be asked to fill out a supplementary form where you need to insert the relevant courses taught in your B.Sc. or M.Sc. For each course field, you can add both theory and sessional courses. This is because, in most universities, theory and sessional courses are combined under a single course.

3.1.4 Contacting the Recommenders

In most cases, the recommenders have to submit the LoRs themselves. That is, a recommender receives an email with a link to submit their LoR in the application portal. In a few cases, especially when an admission portal is unavailable, you may be asked to submit the LoR on

their behalf or mail the LoR to the university directly. In the former, you need to contact the recommenders to remind them to submit the LoRs in the application portal. In the latter, you usually do not need to contact the recommenders later on since it is likely that you are going to handle everything yourself.

Now, depending on the university, the recommender may receive the submission request as soon as you add them to the admission portal, that is, without submitting the application itself. This is usually a good thing because you can make sure the recommenders submit their LoRs before submitting the application, thus, allowing you to modify the list in case a recommender fails to submit their LoR. However, some portals also allow you to modify the list of recommenders even after the submission. Regardless, you will not be able to delete a recommendation if it has already been submitted.

3.1.5 Sending Exam Scores

In most cases, you need to report the GRE and language scores in the portal. While some portals may also allow you to upload an unofficial score (that is, the scanned version of the score or a screenshot of the online report), the graduate school may require an official score to be sent from the exam authority (ETS, IDP, or Duolingo) before your application can be screened by the committee. You can check the admission website or contact the graduate coordinator to find the details. Finding this information can be important if you have a tight budget and are willing to send scores to universities that only require it at the time.

Sending scores is usually straightforward, but make sure to send the score to the graduate school instead of the university itself. In addition, some universities may require you to send the score to a particular department. So, make sure to check the graduate admission website and the department's website before sending any scores.

3.1.6 Submitting the Application Forms

Before submitting the application in the application portal, you need to double-check everything. After that, you need to check two more things:

1. Check if the portal requires receiving the exam scores before submitting the application. If it does, you can only submit the form after it marks the scores as *verified*.

2. Check if the portal requires receiving all the LoRs before submitting the application. If it does, you need to wait until all the recommenders submit their LoRs, that is, they are marked as *submitted* in the portal.

In some cases, the score reports may not appear as verified in the portal. If this happens to you, check the admission page to see if this is a normal situation. If it is not, you can contact the graduate coordinator to inquire about it.

After you are convinced that everything is okay, you can sign your full name and submit the application.

3.1.7 Paying the Application Fees

If there is an application fee, you need to pay it using an international debit or credit card. In some cases, you can only apply for a fee waiver during or after submitting the application. In that case, make sure to apply for a fee waiver if you are on a tight budget.

A Way to Save Some Money

If you fail to secure a fee waiver in a university or still have time (that is, the deadline has not been reached yet), you can choose to wait for the decision from the other universities before paying the application fee. For example, in the College of William & Mary, you may have until March to pay your application fee for the Fall application, and you are expecting to get at least one decision by that time. In such a case, unless the professor in the former is particularly good, you can choose to wait for the decision before paying the application fee.

After paying the application fee, you will be redirected to the application status page.

3.1.8 Waiting for a Decision

If you have applied after contacting a professor, you should inform the professor that you have applied to the program along with the application ID (if any). If you have applied centrally, you have to wait until you are contacted by the admission committee. In both cases, you may be asked to present in a formal interview. In such interviews, members of the admission committee along with the professors you mentioned in your SoP may be present. The strategy to crack such an interview will be available in a later revision.

The decision should be delivered quite fast if you have applied centrally. Make sure to check the application status page regularly as you may not receive an email if your application is waitlisted or rejected.

The decision may take a long time if you have applied after contacting a professor. This largely depends on your profile and convincing power. That is, a professor usually maintains a priority list of candidates. If your position is near the top of the list, you have a better chance of getting admission. **This is why the admission is never confirmed unless you receive an official offer.**

After receiving an offer, be sure to reply with thanks if the email is sent by a human. If you are in contact with a professor, notify them about the admission offer as well. Additionally, if you do not understand any part of the offer letter or see any funding information, feel free to consult the graduate coordinator or your professor. In some universities, the funding decisions are made at a later time, or in case you are admitted centrally (e.g., in the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign), you may be required to find an adviser by emailing the professors you mentioned in your SoP.

Time It Takes to Deliver an Admission Decision

For the Fall session, the decision starts to roll out as early as January. However, in the US, most applicants are given until April 15 to submit their decision. So, if you see no changes in your application status, chances are that the graduate school is still waiting for decisions from the applicants who are offered admission. So, it is best not to lose hope. There are cases where admission was offered as late as August, weeks before the class start date.

3.2 Making an Admission Decision

When you have more than one *official* or *unofficial* offer in your hand, it is time to make a decision. Depending on the situation, you may have to be a bit political about it. So, before making a decision, you need to understand your and the professors' perspectives and the factors that should affect your admission decision.

3.2.1 Understanding the Perspectives

Professor's perspective

The professor is well aware that you are trying to get into the best graduate school possible. Hence, they too will have more than one candidate in their list as backups. If you receive the offer early, it means you are located on top of the list. Because a professor usually recruits a handful of students each year and they cannot risk offering to more students than the allocated amount at a time. Once you are offered officially, there is usually no way for the professor to take it away unless you explicitly decline it. So, if the professor has limited funding, you may be asked to make a decision as soon as possible, and if you are not yet offered by the professor, they may ask for more time instead of rejecting your offer as they will be waiting for the decision made by the other students who were offered admission. In some extreme cases, the professor may even ask you to decide by a date earlier than the one stated in the offer letter. In addition, if you can prove that you are an outstanding student, the professor may also manage extra funding in the form of a fellowship to make the offer more tempting.

Your perspective

Reaching a decision earlier has several benefits. Firstly, you will be able to apply for a visa and attend the interview early which may save you from the visa-related complications described in §4.1. Secondly, you will be able to book your flight early which may save you a lot of money since the fare increases as time progresses. Thirdly, you will get enough time to research the housing options. In most cases, you may not be able to secure a cheap on-campus apartment or house in which case, you may need to look for cheap apartments or houses that are located within a walkable distance from the campus or near a bus stop. This is particularly a difficult part of the entire process, especially if the lease term is a year or so. Finally, you will get enough time to take the required vaccines or some other administrative tasks such as sending official transcripts by mail or attending the orientation program.

However, there are some demerits too. For example, you may still be waiting for the decisions from your favorite professor or university. This is especially true if your profile is not outstanding.

3.2.2 Factors You Should Consider

Below is a list of factors that you should consider before making a decision. This is an ordered list where the first items get more priority.

Your prospective advisor & the nature of research. A good professor will make your life easier, and a bad professor can make it a living hell. So, if you are assigned a professor, make sure to check their background first. You can gather information from the professor themselves, their current and previous students. You can also ask any Bangladeshi students to see if they can help. Examples of information include work ethics, lab environment, weekend and vacation policy, expectations from the students, number of meetings and their types, workloads, funding situation, etc. Similarly, you may need to check the nature of the research you are going to do. For example, whether the research is overly theoretical, or whether it is a high-risk project.

Other professors. It is generally beneficial to have a few professors working in the same field. This creates a possibility of getting involved with different projects in your field as well as changing labs in case it does not work out with your current advisor (which is not infrequent, by the way). In some universities, no advisors are assigned in the first year. So, having several professors in the same fields helps there as well.

Funding, health insurance, living cost & transportation. Funding is another crucial aspect that you may need to consider. If you are fully funded, the university will usually provide you with enough money to sustain at least two persons in the university location. However, it depends on a few factors, such as the location, number of dependants, your spending habits, and lifestyle. But usually, most of your stipend will be spent on paying your house rent. If the area is very expensive, you may be offered a higher stipend due to higher living costs, but even then, your living standards may be worse than someone living in a small college town due to additional costs. For example, if your university is located in New York City, you will be offered a higher stipend, but you may still have to use your savings or lead a miserable life. In some cases, you may seemingly be offered a good stipend with free tuition, but there may be additional fees (sometimes we call them “hidden fees”) and partial healthcare subsidy which may eventually reduce your actual salary (which

also means you pay higher taxes for your income since the tax is calculated on your entire income). So, be sure to go through your offer and the graduate handbook (or something similar) to understand your financial standings. You can also consult the current Bangladeshi students of the university to get an idea about your funding situation. Another important aspect is the availability of public transportation. In some universities (e.g., Purdue University), public transportation is completely free for students within the town, but in most cases, public transportation is not free. In the US, the availability of public transportation varies a lot. So, it is better if you can buy a car soon after moving to the place. In Europe, some big cities have plenty of public transportation available, but in other places, you may have to live near the university or buy a car. If you are a self- or partially-funded student, you should prepare yourself from day one to get an internship. Unless your family can afford the tuition fees and living costs, you may have to lead a miserable life or even return to Bangladesh without completing the degree.

In some cases (e.g., the University of Georgia), there may be some deficits despite being fully funded. This usually happens due to a higher estimation of living costs or university fees and usually is a formality. But in those cases, you will need to show a bank statement and/or financial solvency to the university and the consulate.

Again, funding is a serious matter, and you should thoroughly go through your offer letter, graduate handbook, and website, tax laws to have a good idea about your funding situation. You should consult the graduate coordinator and/or your professor regarding your offer if you fail to understand any part of it.

Rank. Unless you are going to an Ivy League school, ranking usually does not matter, especially if your eventual target is joining the industry. Also, the rank of the department, subject, or program often matters more than the overall university ranking. For example, Georgetown University may not particularly be known for its Computer Science program, but it is widely known for its attractive law programs. Similarly, a top-ranked university may not have good research facilities for your particular research that a mid-ranked university may have. So, do not get fixated on ranking. What matters more are the professor, funding, and research opportunities which have a direct and immediate effect

on you and are already covered above.

Your spouse. If you are married and your spouse is also pursuing higher study, it will be better if both can manage to study in the same university or, at least, in the same area. This not only reduces the monthly cost but also ensures mental support on a bad day.

Other key factors may include weather (some people cannot tolerate cold weather), coursework, the average number of years it takes to graduate, crime rate, politics, etc. But these factors are likely optional for most people.

3.2.3 Confirming Admission

If you have more than one offer, you should consider the factors and perspectives described above and decide where to admit. But whatever you do, **never give a professor false hope**. You should be honest about your current situation and convey that to your professor. For example, if you have multiple similar offers and cannot decide which one to accept, convey this information to your professor. Some universities (e.g., Penn State University) grant additional funding for students with competitive offers. In addition, the professor may hold additional interviews to motivate you to join their lab, which is not a bad thing either. However, not all professors like this level of honesty. So, you have to be a bit political here if you suspect a professor to be of that type.

For US admissions, if you have applied after contacting a professor but are unsure of admission, it is better to avoid taking an I-20 without prior permission from the professor. In some cases, the professor may only have the funding to recruit one student, and taking the I-20 assures them that you will be joining them, and if you do not join later, it will create a bad impression on you, RUET, and, in extension, Bangladesh. So, please do not take the I-20 without confirming an admission. Instead, you can ask your professor or graduate coordinator regarding funding or ask for a sample of the funding offer letter.

If a professor takes a long time to respond or offer you admission, they have already offered other candidates like I said in the beginning. In such a case, you should ask other professors for additional time if it is not already near the deadline. If the professor cannot offer you admission by the deadline, my suggestion would be to skip it. Because admission is not granted there, you may have the risk of losing both offers.

Deciding which university to attend can be a difficult decision to make, especially due to the rolling admission system. But you need to consider all the factors carefully, discuss them with professors, alumni, and running students, and make a decision. The decision you make will affect you for the next two to six years depending on your program length. So, avoid being hasty.

The Decision Has to Be Yours Alone.

While you can take help from others, the final decision has to be made by you. Because you know yourself better than anybody else.

3.2.4 Deferring Admission

After confirming the admission, you may face difficulties in attending the program in the designated semester/quarter due to unforeseeable circumstances, such as delay in getting a visa, inability to find accommodation, national and international crises, or personal issues. In such cases, it may be possible to defer the admission for a semester/quarter or two. The process of deferring admission varies from university to university and program to program. So, be sure to check the graduate and the department websites to find policies regarding deferring an admission. Even if there is not a specific policy, the department may approve your request under extraordinary circumstances. So, be sure to contact the graduate division as well as your advisor (if any).

Chapter 4

Post-admission

After successfully completing the admission process, it is necessary to obtain a visa, book a flight, rent an apartment, do some shopping, take a few required vaccines, etc. A few of the tasks can be done in parallel, and others sequentially.

4.1 Obtaining a Student Visa

You can start filling out a visa application form as soon as you get an admission confirmation from your university. The confirmation should include all the funding details that you can use to fill out parts of the visa form. The nature of the application form varies from country to country. In many countries, this is handled by an external organization namely VFS Global.

Visa Application Integrity Disclaimer.

All visa application procedures and interview strategies outlined in this section and the linked appendices are intended to help applicants present their genuine circumstances accurately and effectively. They do not endorse:

- Making false statements to immigration officials
- Misrepresenting financial circumstances or academic credentials
- Providing fraudulent documentation.

Immigration fraud is a serious criminal offense with severe penalties including visa denial, deportation, and permanent inadmissibility. Al-

ways provide truthful and accurate information in all immigration matters.

Visa Interview Questions

A list of frequently asked questions in the visa interview is available in Appendix E.

4.1.1 Arranging Required Documents

Typically, you need to arrange the following items to make it easier to fill out the visa application form as well as attend the interview. During the interview date, you need to take hard copies of all the required documents with you.

1. Your passport, including any old passports
2. Two 2"×2" copies of your photo. The photos should not be less than three months old. If there are any visible changes to your face, such as a large pimple or a scar after the photo was taken, you should take a new photo. The photo must contain your face, ears, and shoulders, and the background of the photo should be white.
3. Your birth certificate
4. Your national ID (if any)
5. Language score (IELTS/TOEFL/Duolingo)
6. Marriage certificate and/or Nikahnama along with photos of marriage (if applicable)
7. All academic transcripts and certificates, including SSC and HSC
8. Admission offer letter
9. Funding letter
10. Your CV
11. Bank statement (if not fully funded)
12. I-20 form (USA only).

For each dependant, you will also need their passports, photos, birth certificate, national ID, and I-20 form (USA only).

Additional items needed to fill out the visa application form but do not need to be carried in the interview:

- A contact person in the destination country (use the graduate coordinator's details if you do not have any)

- Details of the close relatives living in the destination country
- Your parents' details
- Details of two friends or acquaintances currently residing in Bangladesh
- Your work information (if applicable)
- Social media profiles used in the last five years
- Email addresses and phone numbers used in the last five years
- Voluntary organizations where you are a member
- Travel history (if any)
- Any critical health problems
- Any active police cases.

Here “details” implies full name, full address, email, and phone number. In addition, keep a photocopy of the passports with you.

4.1.2 Obtaining a US Visa

Obtaining a US Visa has a few simple steps:

1. Fill out a DS-160 form¹ as soon as you receive an I-20 form from your university. Take at least a day to fill out the entire form, and then take another day or two to verify the information. You can also ask your friends or family members to verify the information. Make sure to download the DS-160 confirmation form after submitting the form.
2. Create an account in the CGI portal² and fill out the form with the information from the DS-160 form
3. Pay the required visa fee via BEFTN from your bank account (do this before noon on a working day for best results) and save the payment slip
4. After your payment is confirmed in the CGI portal, you can schedule an appointment
5. Pay the SEVIS fee³ at least a week before the interview date and save the payment slip
6. Attend the interview along with the required documents. In addition to the documents mentioned in §4.1.1, you also need to

¹<https://ceac.state.gov/GenNIV/Default.aspx>

²<https://www.ustraveldocs.com/bd/en/nonimmigrant-visa>

³<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>

carry a DS-160 confirmation page, SEVIS payment slip, visa fee payment slip, and visa appointment confirmation page. Try to reach the embassy at least an hour ahead unless the interview is on Friday. They usually check the appointment confirmation page, I-20 form, and passports. The entire process is very straightforward and you should not need any additional help.

7. If your visa has been approved, wait for the CEAC status⁴ to be “Issued”. Once it is issued, you will get an email from the embassy confirming that your passport is delivered to VFS Global (or the address you set in your CGI portal profile if you choose to get it delivered)
8. Carry the photocopy of your passport to collect your passport. If you are collecting the passports belonging to someone else or dependents, you need an authorization letter for them (except for the underage children).

Possible complexities and their resolution

Obtaining a US student visa can be complicated for some people. A few known issues are described below:

You made a mistake in the DS-160 form. If the mistake is found before submitting the form, you can easily fix it by retrieving the form once again. However, if it is found after submitting the form, you need to create a new DS-160 form using your old application ID. This once again generates a new application ID which you have to update in the CGI portal before attending the interview. But if you update it only a day or two before the interview date, you may need to inform the visa officer who checks your passport on the interview day.

Visa was rejected. When your application was rejected by the visa officer, the officer should also provide a reason for it. For a self- or partially-funded student, a common reason for rejection is their inability to convince the officer about their studentship in the USA. This usually means that you should focus on clarifying your sponsorship and/or your strong will to return to Bangladesh after completing the course.

CEAC status is stuck on “Accepted”. If the CEAC status has been stuck on “Accepted” for more than a week, it usually means

⁴<https://ceac.state.gov/CEACStatTracker/Status.aspx?App=NIV>

your application is going through administrative processing (AP). While certain subjects may cause an AP⁵, the process appears to be somewhat random, and you cannot do anything other than hoping that it will be changed to “Issued” one day. However, you can confirm whether it is going through AP by emailing the embassy.

CEAC status is changed from “Accepted” to “Refused”. On rare occasions, CEAC status can be changed to “Refused” during the administrative processing (AP) and later changed to “Issued”. This is also a normal process. Like the previous point, you can email the embassy to confirm it. But if you receive a refusal email from the embassy, it means your visa was refused during AP, and you need to apply again.

Visa officer handed you a list. In a few cases, the visa officer may hand you a list of documents you need to submit to VFS Global or online via email (e.g., 221(g) form). In this case, you simply need to go through the list and submit the documents applicable to you. As of May 2025, the visa officer may also hand you the 221(g) form as part of social media vetting. If they ask you to make your social media profiles public but you have already made them public, make sure to inform the officer about it. This is also a form of administrative processing (AP), and it may take several weeks to issue your visa. If the visa officer handed you your passport, you may receive an email asking you to submit your passport to VFS Global once the AP is complete.

No appointment slots available. Most frequently, you may not find any appointment slots at all. In that case, you can follow the Telegram groups⁶ that regularly posts any available slots. You can reschedule only three times. Alternatively, you can make an emergency request (ER). Once an ER is granted, you can choose an emergency slot within seven days. During the ER period, you are allowed to reschedule as many times as you want. However, since you only get seven days, it is better to check if there are any emergency slots available within your desired time before making a request. There is a Telegram group dedicated to reporting the ER slots and providing resources to make an ER.⁷

⁵<https://www.bu.edu/isso/files/pdf/tal.pdf>

⁶One such group is https://t.me/+NEcX-i-m1_9jMTU1

⁷<https://t.me/+1x1jzi1j0VA50TQ1>

ER Request Letter.

A sample of an ER request letter can be found in Appendix B.

You want to change university before the interview. You can simply create a new DS-160 form (or update the existing one if you have not submitted it yet) and update the university information and the SEVIS number. In addition, if you have already paid the SEVIS fee, you need to transfer the fee to your new SEVIS number.⁸

4.2 Taking the Required Vaccines

You may be required to take a few vaccines before moving to the destination country. In some cases, the requirements are imposed by the university rather than the country. Typical vaccines include the following:

1. Mumps, measles, and rubella (MMR)
2. Tetanus, rabies and pertussis (Tdap)
3. Hepatitis B
4. Meningococcal, and
5. Chickenpox (Varicella).

In addition, you may also need to test for tuberculosis (TB).

If the vaccines are not required by the country, you can consult your university or potential healthcare provider to see if the health insurance can cover them. If they are not covered by the health insurance, or they are required before the class starting date, you may need to take them in Bangladesh. The TB test, if required, should also be done in Bangladesh.

Additionally, if your flight has a layover in a third country, they may impose a vaccination policy as well. So, be sure to check it beforehand.

If you are required to take the vaccines, you should start taking vaccines as soon as you get an admission confirmation. Otherwise, you may not have enough time to take all the required vaccines.

⁸<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2017/06/students-sevp-now-accepts-online-i-901-sevis-fee-transfer-requests>

Taking Vaccines in Bangladesh

Many vaccination centers in Bangladesh offer packages for those going abroad. Although the packages may look attractive, not every vaccine or test may be required by the destination country. Besides, it is a good idea to take vaccines from a reputed vaccination center or doctor and do the tests from a reputed diagnostic center. For example, some vaccination centers may administer all the required vaccines at once due to a shortage of time which may void any effectiveness of the vaccines, some may even administer fake vaccines. This is also why you need to start taking vaccines early so that you may have enough time to take all the dosages.

4.3 Booking a Flight

Unless you are going to India, you have to book a flight. Many international airlines such as Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airways, and Turkish Airlines offer discounts to students. The services provided by the airlines are more or less the same. So, you can select the airlines that offer the best price and luggage support.

There are three types of luggage you are usually allowed to carry:⁹

Checked luggage. The luggage you need to submit to the airlines during the check-in. Most airlines allow two checked luggage for free. Qatar Airways student package allows three checked luggage for free whereas Cathay Pacific allows only one checked luggage in their economy package. The weight and size of each luggage also vary. But it is ideal to buy a 28" luggage with 23 kg capacity.

Carry-on luggage. The luggage that you can carry with you. The airlines may offer you to check it too for free in some cases. Most airlines allow only 7 kg in a piece of carry-on luggage with a pre-defined size. Turkish Airlines allow at most 8 kg, however.

Additional item. The additional item that you can carry with you. This is usually your laptop bag or handbag containing only your

⁹The information provided here was fetched in June 2024. The luggage requirements are frequently revised and the information provided here should not be taken for granted.

laptop and a few files required during the immigration. Not every airline (e.g., Emirates) allows additional items, and the additional item is counted towards the carry-on luggage. That is if you have carry-on luggage and an additional item, the combined weight should be 7 kg (depending on the airline).

There are also limits to what you can carry. For example, you may not be allowed to carry sharp objects in your carry-on luggage. Each airline has its own policies. So, be sure to check them out.

Most airlines also offer free Wi-Fi in the airport and inside the plane. But it varies largely from airline to airline.

You can also select seat(s) while booking a ticket. However, selecting a seat may cost extra. Most airlines allow you to select seats for free within 24 hours of the flight or just assign randomly. So, you can wait for that moment instead. If you have not selected a seat during booking and the airline offers online check-in within 24 hours, make sure to check in as early as possible to avoid being waitlisted due to overbooking.

Finally, the transit (if any) period should not be less than two hours. If you have never traveled on a plane before, the transit period should be greater than four hours. The flight may be delayed due to various reasons. So, it is better to be prepared for the worst. For long transits, most airlines usually offer complimentary hotels, tours, or meals. The former two may require a tourist visa which may cost extra. In some cases, the transit may take place in different airports or another terminal of the same airport that do not have direct a transit option through the international area, or the transit may require an overnight stay which, according to the country policy, may require a transit visa. Make sure to check the transit policy of the country before buying a ticket as you may also need to obtain a transit visa. You should also carry an empty water bottle if you have a long transit.

You should book a flight as soon as your visa is issued. In the Fall and Spring sessions, the price of the tickets may increase dramatically as the date approaches. Also, it is better if you buy a ticket using your account instead of a third party. This way, you can get a student discount as well as a flight score that you can redeem on your next flight.

4.4 Seeking Accommodation

Seeking accommodation is one of the most tedious tasks that you should start as soon as you book a flight. Depending on the country,

area, and requirements, finding a good apartment or house can also be very complicated. There are two types of accommodation:

1. On-campus accommodation
2. Off-campus accommodation

On-campus accommodation is the best and the easiest solution to the problem. However, the university may not have sufficient houses or apartments to accommodate every graduate student, or the rent may be too high. The former is especially true for those who are in need of family housing. The alternative is off-campus accommodation which is not so easy.

There are several ways to find an off-campus house or apartment. They include online directories (e.g., apartments.com), Facebook groups, and Bangladeshi students. Sometimes, the university may provide a website or channel that lists off-campus houses or apartments for rent. You can also ask your advisor for help if you are unable to find a good house or apartment.

Scam Alert!

There are a lot of scams in the online directories and Facebook groups. Be sure to verify the location of the apartment as well as the landlord of the apartment before signing a contract. You can ask a Bangladeshi or a lab member to verify those information.

There are primarily three types of accommodation:

House. A house is a one- or two-storied building where tenants share a bathroom, kitchen, and living room. A house can accommodate about half a dozen people or more. There are usually one or two master bedrooms in a house that come with a private bathroom and cost more than the rest.

Apartment. An apartment is usually a flat in a multi-storied building consisting of several bedrooms, a private or shared bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room. It can accommodate about half a dozen people or less. The rent for each bedroom is usually the same except for the ones with a private bathroom.

Studio. A studio can be a house or an apartment that consists entirely of a single room. The room contains a bed, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a small space that acts as a living room. They usually cost more but are ideal for small families who require privacy.

Once you select an accommodation, you may need to sign a contract. The contract is usually for a year, but it may be for nine months or less depending on the location and time of year. Sometimes month-to-month contracts are also possible. However, in all cases, you may have to pay an application fee and make a security deposit.

After you get the house/apartment keys, the first thing you should do is inspect the area assigned to you. This includes your bedroom, bathroom, and common area in the house/apartment. While inspecting, if you find any irregularities (e.g., rusty iron pipes, torn carpets or walls), take pictures of them and make a complaint to the landlord. Otherwise, when you move out, your landlord may not pay back the entire security deposit citing those faults.

4.5 Shopping in Bangladesh

Depending on your habits, gender, and the weather in the area you will be living in, you may need to buy a lot of things in Bangladesh. It is usual to buy two checked luggage and a carry-on luggage to carry everything. Typically, you need to buy the following items:

Clothings. T-shirts, formal shirts, pants, trousers (cotton and sports), sarees, kurta/panjabi, hijab, burqa, salwar kameez, sweater, jacket, underwear, raincoat (if it rains a lot), handkerchiefs.

Footwear. Sandals, flip flops, sneakers, socks.

Bedroom Items. Bed sheets, pillow, pillow coverings, kantha, বিছানার ঝাড়ু.

Bathroom Items. Towel, toothbrush, small toothpaste, small soap, small shampoo, hair trimmer, nail clipper.

Electronic Items. Multi-plug (voltage rating: 100-250V), universal travel adapter (voltage rating: 100-250V).

Personal Items. Leather belts, prayer mat, wallet, prescribed glasses, sunglasses, umbrella.

Others. Non-generic medicines, flags of Bangladesh.

You can buy most other products from supermarkets, Indian shops, discounted shops, Facebook Marketplace, or on sale. So, unless you have space left in your luggage, there is no need to bring anything else.

Traveling to the US?

Most Bangladeshi phones do not have the necessary bandwidth required by the US providers. The only known smartphones having full US cellular bandwidth support are Google Pixel phones and Apple iPhones. In case you do not have these phones, consider buying, at least, a cheap second-hand Pixel or iPhone for your safety.

Roaming outside Bangladesh.

Most network providers support roaming outside Bangladesh. Grameenphone¹⁰, for example, offers SMS roaming for free which you can enable by converting your SIM to postpaid and adding a dual currency card. This can be useful if you use your number for various purposes, such as retail or mobile banking, or for simply reserving your phone number.

4.6 Traveling to the Destination

Usually, you are required to check in at the airport at least three hours before the flight. However, this may not be required if the airline has an option for online check-in. Immigration complications may arise and/or officers may not be aware of the airline policy, so it is always a good idea to arrive at the airport on time.

After arriving at the airport, you need to find the gate number for your airline. This is optional, because you can still find it later after entering the airport. Upon entering, you may be asked to put your luggage in a conveyor belt for security checks which you need to collect again after crossing the metal detector. After the security check, you need to find your desired airline counter where you can check your checked luggage and obtain a boarding pass, that is, the ticket. If you have checked in online, you may already have your mobile boarding pass. If that is the case, you do not need a printed boarding pass if the airports that you are going to use support a mobile boarding pass. For international travel, it is still a good idea to have a printed boarding pass.

After obtaining a boarding pass, you need to complete your immigration at another counter where an immigration officer will check your ticket and boarding pass and take a picture of you. You may also

¹⁰As of January 2025

need to fill out a form. After that, you will enter the departure area and have to wait until a gate number for your flight is announced.

Once a gate number is announced, you need to find the gate and join the queue in front of the gate for another security check. Once the security check is finished, you need to wait for the plane to arrive and be ready for departure. You may be asked to join a line depending on the type of ticket and the seat number. You need to follow the instructions and act accordingly.

During the transit, you can directly proceed from the arrival to the departure area if the airport has the option to do so and the next flight is in the same airport. Airports that offer this option usually do not require a transit visa even if it is an overnight stay. However, there will still be a security checkpoint that you need to cross before entering the departure area. After entering the departure area, you need to check in again to obtain another boarding pass. In case it requires a transit visa, be sure to check if the airline requires you to fetch and re-check your checked luggage during the check-in. The easiest way to do this is to check the destination airport code on the luggage receipt attached to your previous boarding pass. You can also ask the airline for meal coupons if it is a long transit although they should offer you one in advance. Large airports usually have plenty of restrooms, prayer rooms, sitting places, and often, quiet places to sleep and rest. There can also be paid lounges, sleeping pods, hotels, shops, etc. Make sure to plan ahead of time if you have a long transit. You should also look for the departure gate number and the time when the gate opens. The rests are the same as before.

Once you have arrived at the last international airport, you will need to complete the immigration to enter the country. Usually, there will be a queue for your specific visa type. Make sure to join the correct queue to avoid any immigration delays. The immigration officer may check your passport and any additional documents such as I-20 (USA-only) and offer letter, and ask a few questions regarding your program, university, or place to stay. If they are satisfied with your answers, they will take a picture of you before returning the documents.

After that, if you have an additional plane to catch, you may have to move to the local departure area along with your luggage collected from the conveyor belt (as required).

After arriving at the destination, you may need to buy a SIM card since a SIM card is essential for communication. Most airports have specific places where you can find prepaid SIM cards that you can buy with cash. Otherwise, you may need to find a shop nearby. If you know anyone in the area, you can ask them for a lift beforehand for

an overall smooth experience. Otherwise, you may need to arrange alternative transportation, such as Lyft (US only), Uber, train, bus, or a taxi.

4.7 Checking-in to the International Office

In most cases, you can check in to the international office by filling out an online form. In the form, you may need to insert your present address, phone number, and emergency contact information. You may also need to upload additional documents, such as the visa stamp, a recent picture of you, and the I-94 form¹¹ (US-only).

4.8 Tuition and Living

Tuition fees depend on your university policy. If you are enrolled in a Ph.D. program, the university or the professor is likely going to pay you a salary and waive most if not all fees. The frequency of salary payment as well as the salary scale varies a lot depending on the type of scholarship (e.g., fellowship, research assistantship, teaching assistantship, or on-campus job) and university policy (monthly, biweekly, or per-semester payments are very common). For M.S. programs, this is not as straightforward. If you are in the program as part of a scholarship program (e.g., Erasmus Mundus), or if the university dominantly recruits M.S. students, the situation should be very similar to the Ph.D. programs. It may also be possible to manage funding after joining the program. But this kind of funding is not guaranteed.

As described in a previous chapter, living depends on many factors such as your lifestyle, spending, area, environment, and dependents. If you are not on your own, it also depends on the source of funding. In most countries, you are also allowed to work off-campus which you can leverage to improve your living condition. However, in the US, you are not allowed to work off-campus unless certain criteria are met. “Curricular Practical Training” (CPT) allows you to work off-campus either half-time (during regular semester) or full-time (during summer) provided the work you are going to do is related to your field of study. As I have said before, you should research your options before joining the program to avoid becoming a victim of mental and financial depression. But things may not go as you expect, and you may be in need of financial assistance. If that is the case, there are several options for you:

¹¹<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/search/recent-search>

- Consult the graduate coordinator of your department or program detailing your situation. They may help you secure an on-campus job. If you are located in the US, they may also help you obtain a temporary work permit from USCIS, especially if you are facing homelessness.
- Leverage the country or state's food and nutrition program which you may apply for if you have little to no earnings (e.g., EBT project in California). These programs usually provide you with a card that you can use to obtain certain things for free or a small amount of money.
- Leverage your university's basic needs program. Many universities have a basic needs program that allows their students to get certain items, especially food items, for free.
- Leverage your local charity. In many countries, the local church or mosque may offer free furniture and clothing to people in need. They may also offer free food and grocery items regularly.

4.8.1 Applying for a Social Security Number in the US

If you have a non-fellowship offer, that is, an on-campus job in the US, you need to apply for a social security number (SSN) immediately after you receive the offer in order to avoid any delays in your payment. SSN acts as a temporary work permit for people staying in the US under a temporary visa. To apply for an SSN, you need to visit the SSN website¹², fill out an application form, and obtain an application ID. After that, you need to schedule an appointment with the nearby Social Security Administration (SSA) office within 45 days, and visit the office on the appointment date with the following information:

1. SSN verification form obtained from the university
2. Passport
3. I-20 form
4. Most recent I-94 form.

You should receive your social security card within two weeks.

4.8.2 Applying for a Credit Card

Like in Bangladesh, credit cards are mostly useless for most people. However, credit cards often come with many offers that may help you save some money. For example, some credit cards offer 5-8% cashback

¹²<https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/request-number-first-time>

on groceries in the US. A few debit cards also provide something similar, but the amount of offers is usually less than that of credit cards. But there are also a few drawbacks to having a credit card. For example, if you are not careful about your spending, you may accumulate debts, or you may face extra charges if you do not pay the fees on time. So, it is advisable that you consider the trade-offs before obtaining a credit card.

In most cases, applying for a credit card requires your government-issued ID (e.g., passport) and proof of income. In the US, you may also be asked to provide your SSN. The credit card issuer usually carries out a background check (e.g., your credit history) before issuing a credit card. However, similar to Bangladesh, you may also obtain a credit card without such checks if you deposit a certain amount of money to the issuing bank.

Appendix A

Email Formats

Important Disclaimer.

These templates are provided as examples for professional communication. All information included must be truthful and accurately represent your actual qualifications and experience.

A.1 Generic Email Format

Use this email format when you do not have the time and/or energy to go through the professor's work. In this format, you write about your research capabilities to impress the professor. However, you still need to know about the topics that interest him. You may also need to attach your CV, transcripts, etc. depending on what the professor has specified on his website (otherwise, you can attach your CV and transcript).

Dear Dr. [Last Name],
Greetings! I am [First Name] from Bangladesh, a prospective graduate student for [Fall 2025]. I completed my [B.Sc.] in [April 2024] from the [Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)] department of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), which is among the top engineering universities in my country.

I am looking forward to enhancing my knowledge and skills through getting into the PhD program of your school. I have a

strong interest in your research topic [topic name]. [Describe how your work is relevant to the interest in four to ten sentences. This includes any research experience, personal interest, particular skills, job experience, etc. with examples. If you have any unrelated research experience, describe how that particular experience along with your interest can add a significant contribution to the field. If you do not have any research experience at all, describe any skills relevant to the topic along with any example projects or contributions.]

[Write about any publications you made (or are making) or any papers you read on the topic (even if you have only read the abstract). If you do not have any relevant publications or read any papers, defend your research potential by recognizing a few recent research done in the field.] Kindly evaluate my profile below.

CGPA: 3.56/4.00 (Senior year GPA: 3.75)

GRE: 311 (Q: 166, AWA: 4)

TOEFL: 100

Publication: 1 journal under review

Job Experience: 3 Months

[Include open source or other contributions here if they are related to your field]

I have also attached my CV and academic transcripts for a better understanding of my profile. I will be looking forward to hearing from you regarding any potential opportunities [in your lab].

Regards,

[Your Name]

[Your website]

A.2 Specific Email Format

Use this email format when you have the time to go through the professor's work or have a special interest in the topic or professor. Depending on the professor's requirements and your findings, you may need to attach your CV, transcripts, papers, etc.

Dear Dr. [Last Name],

Greetings! I am [First Name] from Bangladesh, a prospective

graduate student for [Fall 2025]. I completed my [B.Sc.] in [April 2024] from the [Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)] department of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), which is among the top engineering universities in my country.

I am looking forward to enhancing my knowledge and skills through getting into the [M.S./Ph.D.] program of your school. I am highly interested in your research topic [topic name] as my [undergraduate thesis] was focused on it. [A description of the work you've done in five to seven sentences. If you have published it or it is under review, mention it here. If this particular topic requires certain skills, mention them as well.]

At present, my research is focused on [topic name]. [A description of the work you have been doing in one or two lines.] Please, check my website or attached research synopsis for detailed information regarding my research experience. I have gone through [two] of your recent works to get a deeper understanding of your research field. I have read your paper on [topic name] and found out that it relates to [my undergraduate thesis work]. [Elaborate how it relates to your existing research in one or two lines. Add other related papers if applicable. If it is closely related but not the same, write something like "Although my work was focused on [topic name], I think I have a good grasp on your work".] Hence, I feel I have the expertise and breadth of knowledge to add a significant contribution to your ongoing research. Kindly evaluate my profile below.

CGPA: 3.56/4.00 (Senior year GPA: 3.75)

GRE: 311 (Q: 166, AWA: 4)

TOEFL: 100

Publication: 1 journal under review

Job Experience: 3 Months

[Include open source or other contributions here if they are related to your field]

I have attached my CV, transcripts, and research synopsis for a better understanding of my profile. I will be looking forward to hearing from you regarding any potential opportunities [in your lab].

Regards,
[Your Name]
[Your website]

A.3 Reminder Email Format

Use the following format to send a reminder to a professor:

Dear Dr. [Last Name],
I sent you an email [a few days ago]. I would appreciate it if you
could spare some of your time to take a look at it.

Regards,
[Your Name]

Appendix B

Letters and Applications

B.1 GRE Waiver Request

Some US universities allow GRE waivers based on the request from an individual.

Dear concern,

I am writing this letter to request a waiver for the GRE requirement. While my passion for attending [university name] and taking the GRE is evident in my academic achievements and professional experiences, I would greatly appreciate having alternative options as I am unable to take the exam within the allotted time frame due to unforeseen circumstances.

The [department name] at [university name] expects the students to be mathematically sound to meet the academic standards of the university, and I am pleased to report that I have always excelled in this subject. In high school, I consistently achieved the highest grades in mathematics. [Include any achievements, such as becoming a champion or runner-up in a mathematical Olympiad.] During my undergraduate studies, I continued to excel in mathematics, achieving the highest grades in courses such as Differential and Integral Calculus, Coordinate Geometry and Ordinary Differential Equations, Vector Analysis and Linear Algebra, and Complex Variables, Differential Equations and Harmonic Analysis. Additionally, my proficiency in English is at a professional level, as demonstrated by my [TOEFL] score of [xxx out of 120]. Professor [Your Professor] can attest to my

English skills, as he interviewed me last year.

I am confident in my mathematical and linguistic abilities and believe them to be a strong indicator of my potential success in the field. Therefore, I respectfully request a waiver for the GRE requirement, as I am certain that my academic performance speaks for itself. Thank you very much for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

B.2 Emergency Request Letter for a Student Visa Interview

Some consulates/embassies/VISA processing services allow visa applicants to make an emergency request (ER) for a visa interview. You need to attach the following items with the letter for a better response:

1. Offer letters from the university
2. Expedite letter from the university
3. Filled visa application form, or (for US) DS-160 confirmation
4. SEVIS confirmation (US only, optional)
5. I-20 form (US only)
6. Previous interview confirmation page

The ERs are approved heuristically. So, there is no knowing whether your request will be approved.

Important Disclaimer.

This sample letter is provided as a template for presenting **legitimate emergency circumstances** to embassy officials. All information provided must be:

- Completely truthful and accurate
- Supported by genuine documentation
- Reflecting actual circumstances.

Providing false information in visa applications or emergency requests constitutes immigration fraud and may result in severe legal consequences.

Dear concern,

My name is [Your Name], and I am an [F-1 non-immigrant] visa applicant who has been accepted into a [fully- or partially-funded] [Ph.D./M.S.] in the [Program Name] program at the [University Name]. I am applying for an emergency request due to the following urgent reasons:

1. The start date for my program is [Date], whereas my current visa appointment is scheduled for [a Date that is close to or beyond the start date]. Moreover, I also need to attend a mandatory orientation on [Date]. Therefore, I urgently need an earlier visa appointment date to ensure my arrival in the [Country Name] before the orientation and the start date of my classes.
2. I have been awarded a fellowship of [\$], and another [\$] through employment as a Graduate [Research/Teaching] Assistant, covering [100%] of tuition fees, health insurance as well as living. This offer was made to me for my outstanding academic performance and my potential in [your research area]. It relieves me of my financial concerns so that I can fully focus on academic coursework and research. However, I am concerned about potentially losing this opportunity if I cannot secure an appointment date immediately [as the university does not have a policy of deferring admissions for this program].
3. With a large number of international students preparing to study in the [Country Name] this [semester/quarter], it has become increasingly difficult to find affordable air tickets and suitable accommodation. Receiving the visa confirmation early would be extremely helpful as it would allow me to book flights and secure housing in advance, ensuring a smooth arrival in the [Country Name] at the intended time.

Therefore, I request your consideration of my case. I understand that visa appointment slots are limited. Any earlier available date, even if it is only a few weeks before the date of arrival, would be greatly beneficial.

I have attached copies of [everything mentioned in the list above] for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Appendix C

Withdrawing the Original Certificate

Document Authenticity Disclaimer.

These procedures are intended solely for obtaining legitimate copies of authentic academic documents that you are legally entitled to possess. All documents must be:

- Genuine and unaltered academic records
- Properly authorized by the issuing institution
- Submitted only to legitimate academic institutions or government agencies.

Any alteration, falsification, or misuse of academic documents is illegal and may result in criminal prosecution, visa denial, and permanent inadmissibility to educational institutions.

You may need to withdraw the original certificate to apply to some universities. This is especially true if the passing date written in the provisional certificate exceeds 1 (one) year. Withdrawing the original certificate before the convocation is a tedious task. However, if you have patience, this can be done within a month or so.

C.1 Getting Approval

1. You need to state your reasons for withdrawing the certificate. In most cases, you need to obtain a document from a valid au-

thority containing the term “original certificate”. This can be an electronically signed PDF, web page, or even an email conversation. In most cases, the admission portal or the instructions do not contain the term “original certificate”, they only contain the term “diploma certificate”. In such cases, you may need to send an email to the graduate coordinator asking for a clarification of the term. The conversation must contain an assertion that the “diploma certificate” is indeed the same as the “original certificate”. You should also obtain permission from the coordinator to share the email conversation with the designated authorities in RUET. Print this document as it will be submitted with the application. Also, highlight the “original certificate” phrase in the document with a highlighter pen.

2. Write an application asking for the withdrawal of the original certificate:

তারিখ: ০৮/০৫/২০২৪

বরাবর,

ভাইস চ্যান্সেলর

রাজশাহী প্রকৌশল ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, রাজশাহী।

মাধ্যম: বিভাগীয় প্রধান, [অমুক] বিভাগ, রুয়েট।

বিষয়: মূল সনদপত্রের জন্য আবেদন।

মহোদয়,

বিনীত নিবেদন এই যে, আমি নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের [অমুক] বিভাগের [১০০১] সিরিজের একজন সাবেক ছাত্র। সম্প্রতি আমি উচ্চশিক্ষার উদ্দেশ্যে “[XY University]”-তে [Ph.D.] in [Subject] প্রোগ্রামে আবেদন করেছি। এমতাবস্থায় উক্ত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে মূল সনদপত্রের স্ক্যান কপি চাওয়া হয়েছে। কিন্তু এখনো [১০০১] সিরিজের ওরিয়েন্টেশন না হওয়ায় আমি মূল সনদপত্রটি হাতে পাইনি। ফলে উক্ত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে আমার করা আবেদনটি অপূর্ণ থেকে যাওয়ার আশংকা করছি।

অতএব, অনুগ্রহপূর্বক আমার মূল সনদপত্রের আবেদনটি মঞ্জুর করে আমার বিদেশে উচ্চশিক্ষা লাভের পথ সুগম করে বাধিত করবেন।

নিবেদক,

[[পূর্ণনাম]]
 রোল: [xxyyzzz]
 [অমুক] বিভাগ, রুয়েট।

সংযুক্তি:

- ১। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে প্রাপ্ত মূল সনদপত্রের স্ক্যান কপি প্রদানের প্রয়োজনীয়তা উল্লেখিত ই-মেইলের কপি।
- ২। সাময়িক সনদপত্রের ফটোকপি।
- ৩। একাডেমিক ট্রান্সক্রিপ্ট (নয় পাতার) ফটোকপি।
- ৪। মার্কস ইকুইভালেন্স সার্টিফিকেট, মিডিয়াম অফ ইন্সট্রাকশন, মাইগ্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট ও প্রশংসা পত্রের ফটোকপি।

3. Staple the application form along with all the required documents mentioned above.
4. Take this to your department head to get a signature and a seal on the application.
5. Take the signed application to the Office of the Exam Controller for verification
6. Upon his approval, submit it to the section officer in the certificate section (Md. Mijanur Rahman).
7. Wait for the approval. You can contact Mijan to verify the status of your application.

C.2 Withdrawing the Certificate

1. Deposit ₳3,000 to VC RUET (2434) A/C at Rupali Bank
2. Ask a teacher to attest all the documents (PPC, transcript, etc.)
3. Keep 1 (one) copy passport-size picture of yourself
4. Fill out the application form supplied by the certificate section
5. Staple the deposit slip, application form, and other documents
6. Write your name at the back of your picture
7. Go to your department and ask the head of the department to attach the picture and then sign the application form in the designated section, you need a seal as well

8. Submit this form to the section officer in the certificate section (Md. Mijanur Rahman)
9. Wait for the certificate to be printed and signed. You can contact Mijan to verify the status of your application. It may take up to four weeks to get it ready
10. You need to submit the PPC before withdrawing the original certificate. A RUET teacher can also do this on your behalf.

Appendix D

Obtaining the Official Transcripts

New Online System!

Recently, RUET has developed an online system for obtaining official transcripts.¹ This greatly simplifies the process as you will only need a scanned copy of your certificate and transcript to submit an application. However, it only allows only one forwarding letter per application. This means if you request several official transcripts in one application, each will have the same forwarding letter. The official transcripts are still physical copies that can be sent to the international office via DHL. But DHL charges a lot, so you may want to obtain the copies locally and send them manually with a cheaper option. Charges stated in point 5 still apply in addition to any courier charges.

Document Authenticity Disclaimer.

These procedures are intended solely for obtaining legitimate copies of authentic academic documents that you are legally entitled to possess. All documents must be:

- Genuine and unaltered academic records
- Properly authorized by the issuing institution

¹<https://certificate.ruet.ac.bd>

- Submitted only to legitimate academic institutions or government agencies.

Any alteration, falsification, or misuse of academic documents is illegal and may result in criminal prosecution, visa denial, and permanent inadmissibility to educational institutions.

Here is a step-by-step guide to obtaining official transcripts from RUET:

1. Note down the addresses of the universities in a doc like this:

Ref. No.:	Date:
To, [Some Graduate Admissions] [University Office Building, Room XXX] [YYY University Avenue] [City] [State], [ZIP code] USA	

Make sure to have adequate spaces in every direction as this document will be printed and will be attached at the top of the envelope. You can add more addresses in the identical manner above if you need more than one official transcript.

2. Write an application requesting one or more copies of the official transcript:

তারিখ: ০৮/০৫/২০২৪ বরাবর, ভাইস চ্যান্সেলর রাজশাহী প্রকৌশল ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, রাজশাহী। মাধ্যম: বিভাগীয় প্রধান, [অমুক] বিভাগ, রুয়েট। বিষয়: অফিশিয়াল ট্রান্সক্রিপ্ট প্রসঙ্গে। মহোদয়, বিনীত নিবেদন এই যে, আমি নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের [অমুক]
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বিভাগের [১০০১] সিরিজের একজন সাবেক ছাত্র। বিদেশে উচ্চশিক্ষার প্রয়োজনে আমার [০১ (এক)] সেট অফিশিয়াল ট্রান্সক্রিপ্ট প্রয়োজন।

অতএব, অনুগ্রহপূর্বক [০১ (এক)] সেট অফিশিয়াল ট্রান্সক্রিপ্ট প্রদান করে বাধ্যত করবেন।

নিবেদক,

([পূর্ণনাম])

রোল: [xxyyzzz]

[অমুক] বিভাগ, রুয়েট।

[১]টি বিদেশী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ঠিকানা:

1. [Some Graduate Admissions]
[University Office Building, Room XXX]
[YYY University Avenue]
[City] [State], [ZIP code]
USA

3. Write a cover letter for each official transcript:

<p><i>Heaven's Light is Our Guide</i></p> <p>Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology (Erstwhile Rajshahi Engineering College, and Bangladesh Institute of Technology, Rajshahi) Rajshahi-6204, Bangladesh. (Tel: +880 25888-66798, Fax: +880 25888-67105) E-mail: registrar@ruet.ac.bd, Website: www.ruet.ac.bd</p>	
Ref. No.:	Date:
<p>To, [Some Graduate Admissions] [University Office Building, Room XXX] [YYY University Avenue] [City] [State], [ZIP code] USA.</p>	
<p>Subject: <u>Official Transcript/Certificate.</u></p>	
<p>Dear Sir, Enclosed herewith please find an official copy of the transcript/certificate of Mr. [Amuk] in response to the request made by the person.</p>	
<p>Thanking you,</p>	
<p>Yours faithfully,</p>	
<p>Registrar (In Charge) Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology, Bangladesh</p>	

You need to print two copies of the letter.

4. Make photocopies of the required documents (e.g. PPC/original certificate, academic transcript, etc.). If you require x number of official transcripts, you need to have $x + 1$ copies of the documents.
5. You need to pay ৳30 per page. For one PPC/original certificate, one academic transcript, x number of grade sheets, and one marks equivalence certificate, medium of instruction, migration certificate, and testimonial, you need to pay ৳ $(6 + x) \times 30$. For y number of copies, the total amount would be ৳ $(6 + x) \times 30y$.

You need to pay this amount to VC RUET (2434) A/C at Rupali Bank.

6. Prepare a passport-size picture of yourself and write your name behind it
7. Ask a teacher to attest one copy of the documents
8. Staple the picture at the top right-hand side of the application
9. Staple the payment slip, application form, a copy of each forwarding letter, attested copies of the documents
10. Staple each set of the required documents individually with a forwarding letter on the top
11. Go to your department and get a sign and a seal of the head of the department in the application form
12. Go to the certificate section and submit the application along with all the documents (to Md. Mijanur Rahman)
13. Go to the CSE department and find Md. Mahmudur Rahman Khan
14. Collect the number of envelopes you require from him. He will take ₳30 for each envelope
15. Cut the addresses you printed earlier and stick them at the top right-hand side with glue
16. Wait a few days until the official transcripts are ready. You can contact Mijan to verify the status of your application
17. If they are ready, go to the certificate section and collect the signed documents
18. Check if all the documents are okay and signed properly
19. Write down the reference number and the date in the blank areas at the top of each envelope and insert the documents into each envelope carefully
20. Give the documents to the office clerk. The clerk will seal the envelope with glue and several stamp seals, and Mijan will sign on each of the seals. Your sealed envelopes are ready.

Appendix E

Visa Interview Questions

The questions below are frequently asked by the visa officers at the US consulate. Questions asked at other consulates/VFS Global should also be very similar. For most fully-funded students, the interview would seem like a formality, and the officer would only ask one or two questions. However, it is always a good idea to be prepared for the worst. Along with the questions, I have also suggested some answers. But be aware that, every situation is unique, and my suggestions may not cover each of them. Also, during the interview, it is necessary to answer the questions in the air that may not appear to be rehearsed or memorized, because this is also your instant language test.

Visa Interview Preparations Disclaimer.

The questions and suggested responses in this appendix are provided for legitimate interview preparation purposes only. All responses must be:

- **Completely truthful and accurate** representations of your actual circumstances
- **Based on genuine facts** about your education, funding, and intentions
- **Honest reflections** of your real academic and personal background.

Never provide false information during visa interviews. Immigration officers are trained to detect inconsistencies and deception. Providing false statements in visa interviews constitutes immigration fraud and can result in:

- Immediate visa denial
- Permanent inadmissibility to the country
- Criminal prosecution
- Blacklisting from future visa applications.

Use these questions to prepare honest, clear responses about your genuine circumstances and academic plans.

Why are you going to the USA? I am going to [your university name] to pursue my Ph.D./M.S. in [your subject].

Why the USA? USA is an excellent country to pursue higher study. [Your university] is also one of the best universities in the USA and the world to pursue a Ph.D./M.S. in my field of interest, which is [your research area].

Why Ph.D./M.S.? Briefly explain the reason behind the degree you are pursuing (e.g. I've always been passionate about .../I want to improve my skills in ...).

Why Ph.D./M.S. in [your subject]? Briefly explain the importance of your research area.

Why a second Master's? Briefly explain the reason for pursuing a second Master's. Your explanation should include how a second Master's from abroad will improve your knowledge and experience so that you can fulfill your dreams, such as joining a leading industry in Bangladesh.

Why this university? I interviewed a professor of [this university] who recommended me a fellowship and graduate assistantship.

How did you know about this university? Briefly explain how you have found this university (e.g. I've found it in the USNews ranking for [your subject]/explain the reputation of the university if it has any).

Tell me something about your research. My research is about [your research area]. In particular, [a brief explanation]

Can you simply explain this (your research area)? Explain your research area more simply in three small sentences or less.

Who is your adviser? Dr. [adviser name]

Who is going to pay for your education?/Who is your sponsor? [My father] is going to be my sponsor. (If you are fully funded, you may remind the officer that you are a fully-funded student.)

What does your sponsor/father/mother do? Explain what your father does in three small sentences or less. This is one of the most important questions if you have a deficit. So, make sure to prepare it in a way that will support your case. Examples include specifying an annual income that exceeds the amount needed to maintain your family and your education expenses or having a fixed deposit that exceeds or is equal to the deficit that you have. It is a good idea to avoid making somebody a sponsor who has his own family (i.e., parents and children) to maintain.

How did you manage funding? My adviser managed funding for me./The program is centrally funded.

Is there any teaching requirement? Yes, there is./No, there isn't.

What will be your responsibility as a teaching assistant/research assistant?

Briefly explain your supposed responsibilities, they do not need to be accurate (e.g., I will probably help my professor in grading, making results, checking homework, and taking classes./I will probably read a lot of papers relevant to my research, hold frequent meetings with my adviser, attend conferences, write and present my papers, and finally, do a thesis.)

Did you apply to other universities?/How many universities you applied?
Specify the number of universities you have applied.

What are the universities? Specify the name of the universities you have applied.

Are you currently working? Yes/No. Depending on the amount of funding or purpose of higher study, replying "No" may have consequences. (E.g., Yes, I'm currently working as a [role] at [company]./No, I've just graduated from the university, and I intend to pursue higher study and then start a job/join as a research professor at a reputed company/university in Bangladesh.)

How long have you been doing this job? Specify the number of years or months you have been working.

What are the responsibilities? Briefly explain the job responsibilities (e.g., As a software engineer, I develop and maintain a number of software built for multiple platforms, such as Android and iOS.)

What do you know about [your school location]? Say something about the area that you may have heard from other people (e.g., its location, weather, etc.).

From where you have completed your graduation? From Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology – RUET.

When did you complete your graduation? In [day] [month] [year].

Are you married/engaged? Yes/No.

How long have you been married? [months or years].

Is your spouse going with you? Yes/No.

(To the spouse:) What are you going to do in the USA? I'm going to provide mental support to my spouse during his/her Ph.D.

What is your plan after Ph.D./M.S.? I shall come back to Bangladesh and join as a research professor at a reputed university.

Have you traveled outside the country before? Yes (if you have any travel history in your passport)/No.

Do you have any relatives in the USA? Yes/No. (If “yes”, you may be asked about your relatives and their whereabouts. You need to be honest about them. If you do not know where they live or work, just say that you do not know.)

Do you know anyone in the city you are going to stay? Yes, I've talked to several Bangladeshi students of [your university].

How did you find them? I've found them through the Bangladesh Students' Association of [your university]/Facebook/alumni.

Do you have any siblings? Yes, [number of siblings].