

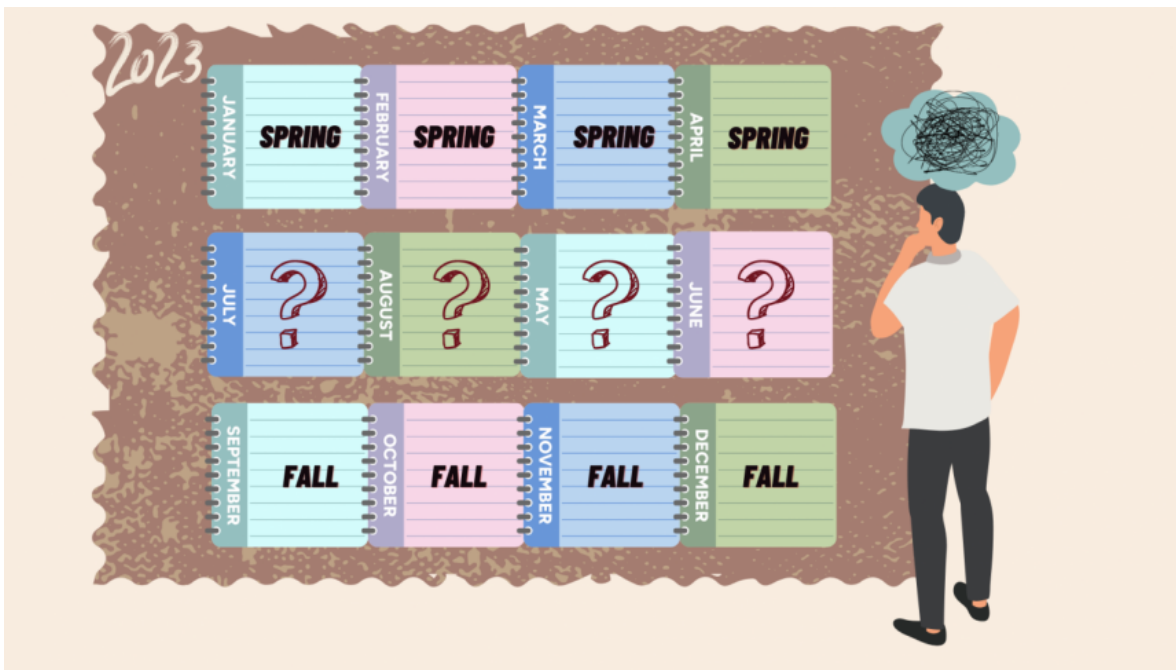
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Proposed two-semester system in private universities plunge students into uncertainty



Mashiyat Nayeem

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Earlier this year, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued a directive for private universities of the country to switch to a 6-month semester system from the current trimester system by mid-2022. While this was alarming for many, the authorities concerned assured that the process was still in the works and that

students would be duly notified well before the implementation. Now, unofficial announcements from private universities have suddenly wreaked havoc by stating that the new system will be in motion from January 2023, sparking fresh outcries from the students.

Despite reassurances from faculty members that new calendars and syllabuses have been developed keeping everything in mind, speculation still runs rampant among students. The lack of any indication of the new framework has plunged students into uncertainty as they are unable to plan for the future.

"Foreign universities usually require applications to be sent a whole academic year prior to enrollment. I was ready to start applying for grad school as I was set to graduate within a year under the trimester system. But with the new system, it will probably take longer. Now I don't know when I can plan for higher education", stated Abrar Anwar*, a student from Independent University Bangladesh.

Many students mirrored similar sentiments, especially those at the brink of graduating. With only a single or a few courses left, these students will be set back by months in entering into the job market or transitioning into their post-graduate life.

"We did not even receive any unofficial message from the faculties about any changes to the system. We are still in the dark. However, judging by the upcoming semester's academic calendar, it seems as if it's going to be a 6-month semester," claimed Ahmed Arif*, a student from BRAC University.

 Spongebob characters in front of private university buildings in Bangladesh

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A common misconception is that the 6-month semester system will only be applicable for newly enrolled students. Given the amount of resources and the sheer number of existing students that private universities already have, it is practically impossible to run two different systems concurrently.

Moreover, it is also unclear whether the syllabus will be revised to fit more content and reduce the number of total courses overall. If they are, then it also begs the question, what is going to happen to existing students who want to retake an old course? For engineering students, another source for concern is the fate of capstone projects, which span across multiple semesters and each part is prerequisite to the next.

The fate of the mandatory internship required to graduate is also in question—whether the duration will be 3 months or 6 months, or whether students will be able to undertake it during summer break as is the case in foreign countries.

One of the biggest advantage private universities have over their public counterparts is the smooth operation of the academic calendar without any session jams, largely due to enrollments thrice a year. If these universities admit a greater number of students to make up for the lost term, the only thing that is certain is the race to grab one of the very limited seats in a required course.

**Names have been changed to maintain privacy*

Mashiyat Nayeem is a contributor at SHOUT. Reach her at mashiyat.nayeem@gmail.com

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