

## Opinion

[Md Mahmudul Hasan](#)

04 May, 2026, 00:00 AM

Last update on: 04 May, 2026, 00:22 AM

<https://www.newagebd.net/post/opinion/298642/what-is-univ-campus-for>

<https://epaper.newagebd.net/04-05-2026/9>

### What is univ campus for?



Faculty of Law, University of Dhaka. | Web

FOOTBALL and cricket pitches are large. They are designed for football and cricket matches. Conversely, badminton and tennis courts are relatively small. In order to play badminton or tennis, players do not need football or cricket grounds. However, if football and cricket facilities are utilized mainly as badminton and tennis courts, such actions will be considered a waste of resources.

Universities are established for teaching and learning. Here all activities should contribute to enhancing students' learning experiences. To run

political programs and campaigns, political parties have their offices and other venues; and to organise political rallies, there are open fields around the country. If university campuses are used for political purposes, that is like using football fields for playing tennis matches, which is a waste — pure and simple.

Such an absurd situation has prevailed at almost all university campuses. Political campaigns are conducted in various localities and neighbourhoods in the country mainly during election seasons. However, university campuses remain political battlegrounds all year round. This is unacceptable.

Universities are built for the purpose of teaching, training students, and preparing them for the future. All campus activities of professors, students and support staff should aim to facilitate and advance that primary goal. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Bangladesh where politicians have used university campuses for the recruitment of party activists and for flexing their political muscle.

At International Islamic University Malaysia where I work, the usual duration of undergraduate classes is one hour and 20 minutes. There is a break of 10 minutes between back-to-back sessions. The morning classes begin at 8:30am, 10:00am, 11:30am, and so on. If a stranger from a country like Bangladesh visits the university and tours an academic building when classes are in session, they may have the misperception that the students are on vacation. This is because of the serenity, solitude, and the peaceful nature that characterize the academic environment of the university. For example, sometimes when I walk in the corridor of my faculty building, say at 10:30am, I don't hear any noise. Lecturers and professors run classes and students follow their lectures, keeping the classroom doors closed.

I think all students should be given such a campus atmosphere to learn. And it is students' responsibility to make the best of such a conducive environment. If they don't, they will have no one to blame except themselves.

In the context of tertiary education in Bangladesh, we can't blame the students. The leaders of the country have failed them. Students at Bangladesh's universities are deprived of a congenial academic atmosphere.

I studied and taught at Dhaka University. During my student life, I saw how our classes used to be disrupted by deafening slogans coming from

processions. Our professors had to pause their lectures for minutes multiple times, as their voices were drowned out by yells and jeers of the chanting processionists, many of whom were non-students and outsiders. When I joined Dhaka University as a faculty member, I had the same experience. Depending on the length of a procession, I had to pause my lectures for many minutes, during which students remained quiet, waiting for the procession to pass. If we add up all the minutes that are so wasted and multiply them by the number of teachers and their students, the net precious time that we lose to campus processions cannot be ignored.

Once in 2009 when I was teaching at Dhaka University, I had some foreign guests. I took them to the university campus to show them around. As we approached the arts faculty building, we faced a long procession full of yelling and screaming. My guests were taken aback, as they thought something terrible might have happened at the university. As they were not Bangla-speaking, one of them asked me in a frantic tone: What do they want!

I managed to make them understand that political rallies are a common sight at Bangladesh's university campuses.

But the question is: How can students concentrate on their studies and learn when lectures are interrupted every fifteen to twenty minutes by political processions?

Is the learning environment at student dormitories any better? Unfortunately, the answer is definitely in the negative.

For decades, residential halls at Bangladesh's universities have been sites of exploitation of students for political purposes. Vulnerable students are often forced to participate in political rallies and sing the praise of certain political leaders and curse others. The situation was perhaps slightly better during the time of the interim government. Now with the return of a political government, things seem to be fast relapsing into old habits and patterns of (political) behaviour. We are getting back to square one yet again.

Are other places at a university any different? Take Madhu's Canteen and the Teacher-Student Centre at Dhaka University as examples.

Madhu's Canteen has been turned into a political pandemonium to such a great extent that it is virtually off-limits to general students. So is the TSC, to an extent.

At most universities around the world, there are comparable places which are called student union buildings or centres. These are exclusively dedicated to student learning or helping students develop various skills needed for their future employability and career success.

Once my family and I lived at a place very near the Student Union building on East Kenwood Boulevard at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. I spent long hours at the Student Union facility reading and writing. The atmosphere is calm and quiet and conducive for academic pursuits and development. Regrettably, student centres at most of Bangladesh's universities do not have such an environment, as they are used mainly for political — not academic — activities.

The TSC of Dhaka University lost such a sense of purpose a long time ago. It is used as a place of political campaigns and related matters, not as a centre dedicated to students' development.

For the terrible mess at Bangladesh's university campuses, we often blame the long arms of politicians and ministers, many of whom are — in the words of former British parliament speaker John Bercow — 'incorrigible delinquent[s].' However, influential university professors cannot absolve themselves of their complicity in ruining the overall campus ambiance. In their desperation to gain access to the corridors of power, they often turn a blind eye to toxic activities of the student wings of various political groups at campuses. Their greed for perks and privileges compromises their integrity and erodes their moral standing. Consequently, they lose the ability to speak truth to power.

Had influential university academics focused on their primary responsibilities, teaching and research and dissuaded themselves from using political connections as a means of promoting self-interests, university campuses would not have been an extension of political party offices.

Lastly, by spoiling the academic atmosphere of university campuses, we are harming our future leaders and thus ruining the future of our country. It is time to put our country before our parochial interests and provide safe and healthy learning environments to our students that they deserve.

*Md Mahmudul Hasan is a professor of English language and literature at International Islamic University Malaysia.*