

## **Navigating Post-Graduation Crossroads: Seeking Employment or Continuing Education**

**Dien Muhammad Alfaen\***

International Islamic University Malaysia

E-mail: alfaenster@gmail.com

*\* Corresponding Author*

**Yusof Ismail**

International Islamic University Malaysia

E-mail: yusof.edu@gmail.com

### **Abstract:**

Hasan Syamsuddin, a native Indonesian, a recent graduate of a public university in Malaysia, faced a pivotal juncture post-graduation: choosing between entering the workforce or pursuing further education. His journey encompassed profound introspection and exploration. Returning to Malaysia for convocation, Hasan reflected on his undergraduate years, contemplating the crossroads between political science and entrepreneurship. He navigates the complexities of dual aspirations – a global career in international relations or entrepreneurial pursuits aligned with his passion for arts and crafts. Amid burnout and rest, Hasan proactively sought opportunities, delving into internships, volunteers and entrepreneurial endeavors. The weight of responsibility as a firstborn intensified the pressure to decide on a path shaping his professional trajectory. Hasan's intricate preparations and scholarship applications for Romania, the US, and the UK showcased his unwavering commitment to learn about and contribute towards global change in international relations.

**Keywords:** Career, Education, Graduate studies, Career management, Scholarship applications

---

### **Reminiscing the Recent Past**

During the tumultuous process of making post-graduate decisions, Hasan, a recent graduate facing the juncture between entering the workforce and pursuing further studies, finds himself in a profound dilemma. This year, brimming with surprises and challenges, has led Hasan through the culmination of his undergraduate journey and into the daunting realm of decision-making for the next chapter of his life. As Hasan reflected on the struggle to complete his final year project and meet the academic demands, he grappled with the question of whether to step into the professional arena or continue his educational voyage.

Hasan Syamsuddin was enrolled in the Faculty of Social Science of a public university in Malaysia. He pursued Political Science, specializing in International Relations. He minored in Entrepreneurship under the Faculty of Business and Economics. Hasan embarked on this academic journey in 2019. This was his first experience pursuing education in a foreign land,

away from his rustic roots in East Java. However, after four transformative years, Hasan not only completed his courses but also overcame the hurdles leading up to his graduation ceremony, a culmination of both academic and personal triumphs.

Returning to his hometown in Sumberejo, a small village located in East Java, Indonesia, Hasan found solace in the familiar embrace of his village after a year-long absence since the last time he returned home. The burnout from the last semester, coupled with the intense academic grind, compelled him to choose rest over immediate action. Despite these challenges, Hasan turned to the internet during moments of respite, seeking options for his post-graduation path. The pursuit of opportunities led him to explore volunteer and internship programmes, reflecting his proactive approach to career development. Intriguingly, Hasan also ventured into the field of entrepreneurship, conceiving business models aligned with his passion for crafts and arts. However, despite his proactive efforts, Hasan found himself stagnating, prompting an unsettling sense of anxiety about his future. The weight of responsibility as a firstborn, setting an example for younger siblings, intensified the pressure on Hasan to make a decision that would shape his professional trajectory. Hasan has four junior siblings, two male and two female, respectively. Pursuing a higher education also presents its own temptation for the fresh graduate Hasan.

### **Awaiting Convocation: Reflection and Reconnection**

After a four-month hiatus, Hasan found himself on the precipice of a significant chapter—the awaited convocation at his alma mater. The anticipation of reconnecting with familiar faces, revisiting cherished places on campus, and embarking on planned and impromptu activities filled Hasan with a mix of excitement and nostalgia.

Two weeks before the graduation ceremony, Hasan boarded a flight from Surabaya, marking his return to the place where his university journey began. The seamless journey back to the university set the stage for a series of memorable experiences and reflections.

Upon his arrival on campus, Hasan secured a dorm room, a strategic choice that allowed him easy access to the familiar spaces that held profound meaning for him. The accommodation choice reflected a desire to immerse himself in the campus atmosphere and engage in activities that would form lasting memories.

The impending arrival of Hasan's parents added an extra layer of significance to this short stay. A week before the convocation, they were set to join him, creating an opportunity for familial bonds to intertwine with the academic celebration. As Hasan settled into his temporary abode, he seized the chance to reconnect with friends—locals, Indonesians, and foreigners alike. The multicultural pot of the university came alive as Hasan engaged in conversations, laughter, and shared moments with friends who had been part of his transformative journey.

Exploration became a central theme during Hasan's short stay on campus. The familiar hostel and faulty cafeterias, once routine stops during his undergraduate days, now held a nostalgic charm. A natural river nestled a couple kilometers behind the campus became a place of reflection, symbolizing the flow of time and experiences during Hasan's university years.

A weekend brought about a pre-planned trip to Thailand, a venture conceived a year earlier with Hasan's closest friends. The four folks explored Phuket, delving into the vibrant atmosphere of Phi Phi Islands, engaging in snorkeling adventures, wandering through the historic Phuket Old Town, and navigating the colorful night markets. The constraints of a limited budget added a layer of resourcefulness to their journey, emphasizing the value of experiences over extravagance.

As a week passed since Hasan's return to Malaysia, the eagerly awaited arrival of his parents finally transpired. Hasan took on the role of the host, picking them up from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and embarking on small trips around Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh. Ipoh is the capital city of the state of Perak. These excursions were not only about exploring cities but also about creating shared memories and reconnecting with his parents after an extended period of separation. A visit to his parents' friends' house in Kuala Lumpur added a sentimental touch to Hasan's stay. The reunion marked an important moment, emphasizing the enduring bonds that extended beyond academic and personal realms.

The climax of Hasan's short return to Malaysia was his convocation, the culmination of years of academic endeavours. The ceremony unfolded seamlessly, without any hindrances, creating a moment of immense pride and joy for Hasan and his fellow graduates. The presence of acquaintances, friends, and underclassmen added a communal celebration to individual achievements.

With the echoes of convocation settling, Hasan found himself at another juncture—preparing to navigate the uncertainties of his post-graduation chapter. The time had come to look beyond the familiar landscapes of the university campus and embark on a new phase of life. Reflecting on these moments, Hasan sees his short stay at the university as an example of his entire undergraduate experience filled with challenges, celebrations, and meaningful connections.

Now, armed with a degree and a wealth of memories, Hasan stands at the threshold of a new chapter. The next step involves not only finding future opportunities but also carrying forward the lessons and experiences gathered during these transformative university years. Whether Hasan chooses to consider the professional realm or pursue further studies, the foundation laid during his undergraduate journey will undoubtedly shape the trajectory of his future endeavours.

### **Post-Graduation Crossroads: Career vs. Education**

Hasan found himself standing at a crossroads after completing his undergraduate studies, facing the intricate dilemma of choosing between entering the professional world or pursuing higher education. Hasan finds himself at a crossroads. Upon returning to Indonesia, his mind was buzzing with aspirations, ambitions, and a yearning to chart a purposeful path forward.

His academic journey, majoring in Political Science with a minor in Entrepreneurship, equipped Hasan with a diverse skill set. While this rich pool of knowledge was critical to his decision-making, it also complicated the process. While contemplating the possibilities, Hasan's heart tugged in two directions - the fascinating domain of Political Science and International Relations and his passion for innovation in the entrepreneurship world.

The allure of a global career within the realm of political science captivated Hasan's imagination. The prospect of becoming a diplomat or contributing significantly to international organizations became the focal point of his aspirations. Eager to unravel the roadmap leading to such esteemed roles, Hasan embarked on an information-gathering quest. He searched deep into online resources, scoured through articles, and attended a paid webinar, hoping to gain insights into the prerequisites for these coveted positions. His findings consistently echoed the necessity of amassing extensive experience through volunteering and internships—a realization that steered Hasan's focus towards enhancing his practical exposure in the field of international relations.

Simultaneously, Hasan envisioned a parallel trajectory in the entrepreneurial arena. His entrepreneurial dreams painted a vivid picture of managing multiple ventures, specifically aligning with his passion for F&B and Arts and Crafts. Fueling this ambition, Hasan plunged into self-study sessions, revisiting his academic notes, and exhaustively researching various business models and proposals. Understanding the intricate mechanisms and potential capital sources for entrepreneurial endeavours consumed his days, yet the magnitude of this venture seemed daunting, especially his political science ambitions.

The pursuit of dual professional trajectories presents challenges. Hasan fervently applied for strategic volunteer and internship positions, both domestically and internationally. However, the lack of responses and numerous rejections from organizations dented his confidence, raising doubts about the viability of these avenues. Gradually, he found himself compelled to prioritize his aspirations in the political science realm over immediate entrepreneurial ventures. With the hope of strengthening his possibility to achieve one of the two of his dreams.

In a moment of introspection, Hasan discovered an enduring desire for continued education. A thriving academic life beckoned—a space where he could explore deeper into his undergraduate discipline and bridge the gaps in his understanding. Embracing this realization, Hasan actively engaged in webinars, focusing on scholarship opportunities toward a master's degree. Recognizing the financial constraints that barred self-funded education, Hasan realized that scholarships were pivotal to materializing his academic ambitions.

In preparation for this academic pursuit, Hasan adopted a meticulous approach. Language proficiency posed a significant challenge, propelling him to relearn English to meet the requirements for tests like IELTS. The compilation of essential documents was an arduous yet critical endeavour, meticulously crafted to align with the stringent requirements of scholarship applications. Hasan's dedication to the pursuit of scholarships stands as a testament to his unwavering commitment to further academic venture.

For Hasan, the aspiration for a master's degree transcends personal growth. It emerged as a beacon of hope for effecting positive societal change and environmental conservation on a global scale. Armed with this vision, Hasan embarked on a journey of preparation, filled with aspirations, resilience, and a fervent commitment to his dreams.

The pursuit of scholarships and the anticipation of commencing a master's degree emerged as an invigorating yet demanding chapter in Hasan's life. His strategic approach and steadfast

commitment underlined his unwavering dedication to educational advancement and the realization of his professional aspirations.

### **Countries of Choice: Global Aspirations**

Hasan's quest for academic and professional advancement extends beyond the borders of his home country, Indonesia. Fueled by a passion for international relations, with a specific focus on matters related to the environment, culture, and societal issues, Hasan casts his gaze upon several countries as potential destinations for his quest of master's degree.

The list of targeted countries was both diverse and purposeful, reflecting Hasan's meticulous consideration of academic programmes and the societal contexts they offered. Among the nations on his radar were Romania, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Romania, a country steeped in history and culture, emerged as an intriguing choice. Hasan recognized the potential for gaining a unique perspective on societal issues, given Romania's rich dossier of traditions. The prospect of immersing himself in an environment where history intersects with contemporary challenges motivated Hasan's interest in the Romanian academic landscape.

The United States, renowned for its academic excellence and global influence, stood out as a beacon for Hasan. The country's commitment to addressing international relations matters, particularly those related to the environment and culture, aligned seamlessly with Hasan's academic and career aspirations. The prospect of studying in the U.S. presented a dynamic platform for Hasan to engage with diverse perspectives and cutting-edge research.

Similarly, the United Kingdom, with its globally recognized institutions and a history of addressing complex societal issues, captivated Hasan's attention. The UK's commitment to fostering a multicultural environment and its impact on international relations made it a compelling choice. The prospect of immersing himself in the academic legacy of the UK resonated with Hasan's pursuit of excellence in the field.

The overarching theme in Hasan's country selection was a strategic alignment of his academic pursuits with nations that had a track record of excellence in addressing the intricate interplay between international relations, the environment, culture, and societal issues. The U.S. and the UK represent academic frontiers where Hasan envisioned delving deep into these matters, contributing to ongoing dialogues, and preparing himself for a career that transcended geographical boundaries.

The reasons behind Hasan's choice of these countries were multifaceted. Beyond the academic considerations, the socio-cultural landscapes of the U.S. and the UK held promise for Hasan's personal and professional growth. The exposure to diverse perspectives and the opportunity to engage with global thought leaders were integral to Hasan's vision of not just pursuing a master's degree but actively contributing to the broader discourse on international relations.

Hasan's goal was ambitious yet resonated with the ethos of his academic journey—to make a meaningful impact on the global stage by addressing critical issues. His choice of countries

reflected a strategic approach, blending academic excellence with a commitment to fostering positive change on a global scale.

Hasan's pursuit of academic excellence led him to discern specific scholarships tailored to each of his chosen countries. For Romania, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Scholarship stood out as a prestigious opportunity offering a comprehensive academic experience in international relations, Babeş-Bolyai University and West University of Timisoara stood out as promising option for Hasan. The United States, a global hub for education, offered the esteemed Fullbright Scholarship. This renowned programme would enable Hasan to engage deeply in the study of international relations with esteemed institutions such as Columbia University and Harvard University. Meanwhile, Hasan aimed to apply for the Indonesian LPDP Scholarship to facilitate his academic journey to the United Kingdom, which would potentially open doors to esteemed institutions like Glasgow University and the University of Edinburgh. LPDP refers to *Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan* or Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education.

Each scholarship carried its unique requirements and selection criteria, demanding Hasan's focused attention. The MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) Scholarship for Romania required a keen understanding of the country's cultural fabric and its significance in shaping global discourse. Conversely, the Fullbright Scholarship for the United States emphasized a strong academic record, a robust research proposal, and a keen interest in addressing pressing international issues. Lastly, Hasan recognized that the Indonesian LPDP (*Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan*) Scholarship for the UK necessitated a careful alignment of his academic goals with the societal challenges prevalent in the UK, especially those related to international relations and cultural dynamics.

As Hasan embarked on the intricate process of applying for scholarships in these chosen countries, he was aware that the journey ahead would demand meticulous preparation. The scholarship application process necessitated a nuanced understanding of each country's academic requirements, cultural nuances, and the specific focus areas of the scholarships he aimed to secure.

In this phase of his academic pursuit, Hasan's strategic thinking and global perspective were poised to shape his future trajectory. The countries he targeted were not just geographical locations for potential academic endeavours, but they were also canvases on which Hasan aimed to paint a narrative of positive change and impactful contributions to the field of international relations.

### **The Path Forward: Preparing for the Next Chapter**

Hasan's journey, marked by academic achievements, cultural exploration, and a commitment to societal impact, reached a pivotal juncture as he prepared for the next chapter. The decision to pursue a master's degree in international relations had evolved into a meticulous process, requiring Hasan to navigate the complexities of scholarship applications, engage in comprehensive preparations, and chart a course that aligned with his aspirations.

As Hasan was engrossed in the application process for the countries of his choice—Romania, the United States, and the United Kingdom—he embarked on a multifaceted approach. His pursuit

was not merely about gaining admission to esteemed institutions but about crafting a narrative that intertwined his academic prowess, personal experiences, and the potential for meaningful contributions to global challenges.

The initial steps in Hasan's preparation were grounded in practicality. Recognizing the importance of standardized language proficiency tests, he devoted considerable time to preparing for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test. Hasan has previously taken the TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language - Institutional Testing Program), achieving a commendable score of 600. However, he discovered that this language proficiency test is only applicable for local Indonesian scholarships and a U.S.-based Fullbright Scholarship. Understanding the need for a broader range of opportunities, Hasan is currently in the process of gearing up for the IELTS test. Aware of its complexity and the expenses involved, he is diligently preparing for this pivotal examination, recognizing its significance in expanding his horizons for international scholarships. As an individual committed to effective communication and understanding the nuances of global discourse, Hasan approaches language proficiency as a cornerstone for successful academic engagement in a new cultural and academic milieu.

Simultaneously, Hasan engaged in a reflective process, identifying key figures from his academic and professional past who could vouch for his capabilities and character. Approaching former lecturers and internship supervisors, Hasan sought recommendation letters that would not only attest to his academic achievements but also provide insights into his character, work ethic, and potential for future success. These letters, Hasan believed, would serve as a testament to his readiness for the challenges of advanced academic pursuits.

Understanding the importance of articulating his vision and purpose, Hasan dedicated his time to practicing both written and oral expression. The composition of essays and motivation letters became a canvas for Hasan to articulate not only why he sought a master's degree but also how this academic journey aligned with his broader goals of fostering positive change in international relations.

Practicing interviews served a dual purpose for Hasan. Beyond honing his ability to respond effectively to queries about his academic and professional journey, these sessions became a platform for self-reflection. Hasan explored into his motivations, aspirations, and the impact he envisioned making—a process that not only enhanced his interview skills but also solidified his sense of purpose.

Recognizing the value of shared experiences and collective wisdom, Hasan actively sought out webinars and joined communities focused on scholarship pursuits. Engaging with individuals who shared similar goals provided Hasan with diverse perspectives, valuable insights into the application process, and a sense of camaraderie in the pursuit of academic excellence.

In essence, Hasan's approach to preparing for the next chapter was characterized by a meticulous and comprehensive strategy. He recognized that success in the competitive realm of international scholarships demanded more than academic brilliance—it required a holistic understanding of self, effective communication of aspirations, and a network of support from mentors, peers, and communities with shared goals.

The tasks Hasan undertook were not mere checkboxes on an application checklist; they were deliberate steps in crafting a narrative of ambition, resilience, and commitment to societal impact. The journey Hasan undertook to prepare for the next chapter was an investment in his future—one where academic pursuit converged with a passion for positive change on a global scale.

### **Prospecting with Hopes**

The entire process of scholarship application has been an effort to achieve his dreams, and he did so with a profound sense of purpose. The path forward was not just about securing admission; it was about positioning himself as a catalyst for positive transformation. Hasan's journey, marked by strategic preparations, reflective practices, and a commitment to continuous growth, stood as a testament to the potential within every young scholar to shape a future where knowledge, empathy, and global understanding converge for the betterment of society.

Hasan's journey after graduation was nothing short of a transformative odyssey, steering him through profound introspection and unwavering determination. Having navigated the post-graduate crossroads with a delicate balance between career aspirations and educational pursuits, Hasan stands at the precipice of a new chapter, armed not just with a degree but with a trove of experiences that have shaped his vision for the future. His return to Malaysia, though brief, was a tapestry woven with moments of reconnection, reflection, and anticipation as he prepared for the awaited convocation. It was a chapter filled with laughter among friends, exploration of familiar haunts, and the joyous embrace of family—a cherished interlude before the forging of a new path. Contemplating a choice between political science and entrepreneurship, Hasan explored various opportunities, ranging from internships to venturing into business initiatives. Ultimately, he realized that his true passion resided in pursuing further education. His meticulous preparation and application for scholarships in Romania, the US, and the UK underscored not just academic pursuit but a fervent commitment to contribute towards effecting global change in international relations.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How would you describe Hasan based on his efforts to continue his education? Explain.
2. Would you agree that if Hasan were to continue his graduate studies in Indonesia, he would be able to also contribute towards his country's international relations with other countries? Take a position and substantiate your answer.
3. In your opinion, is it realistic for Hasan to be able to apply and secure a place abroad this year, i.e., within a few months of his graduation? Explain.
4. Based on the current global economic situation, do you think universities abroad will provide scholarships to international students? Take a position and justify.
5. What will be your suggestion to Hasan if he is unable to get a place from one of the universities that he has applied for? And your justification of the suggestion?
6. In your opinion, how effectively did Hasan manage his future dilemma? Take a position and justify.