

IITs open doors for outside students via research internships

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Don't fret if you don't get into an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). If the massive open online course (MOOC) system was not enough to offer a glimpse of their academics, IITs are gradually opening doors to non-IIT students for high-quality research on their campuses.

Institutes such as IIT-Madras (IIT-M), IIT-Gandhinagar (IIT-G) and IIT-Kharagpur (IIT-K) have been taking steps to allow students from other institutes/universities engage in summer internship programmes for a couple of months and work with their top faculty members.

Among these, IIT-M and IIT-G run structured programmes whereby applications are invited from candidates outside the campus.

For instance, IIT-M is offering a two-month summer fellowship programme for students from outside the IITs. To begin from May 16 this year, the programme will entail a sum of ₹6,000 per month to be provided as stipend to candidates. The institute has set February 28, 2018, as the deadline for submission of applications for the programmes.



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"This is an opportunity for students to work with leading researchers on problems that are current and forefront of technology," said V Jagadeesh Kumar, Dean (Academic Courses), IIT-M. IIT-G, too, runs a similar programme where candidates are offered stipends of ₹4,000-₹5,000 per month.

The IITs see the move as a collaborative effort to share academic and research best practices with students of other institutes as well as create a future pool of potential doctoral and postdoctoral researchers for the campuses.

"Our faculty members not only get to work with some of the best talents in the country but in turn, we get to showcase the cutting edge technology and research work being done at the

campus. This prepares the candidates not only to apply for future research programmes at IITs or further studies but also in placements,"

said Shanmuganathan Raman, assistant professor of Electrical Engineering & Computer Science and Engineering, IIT-G.

Citing one of such instances, Raman said a candidate made it to Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), after completing the internship programme at IIT-G.

According to an IIT-K spokesperson, while a structured programme may not exit at the campus, faculty members hire interns from outside for their research during summer.

Further, as part of their research spend, IITs also have been setting aside additional

funds to pay for the stipends. While applications run in several thousands, finally a few hundred candidates are hired based on merit.

"While we have not put a cap on number of interns under each faculty member, the numbers vary. Usually, we receive over 8000-9000 applications from across the country, while roughly 150-200 are selected. The faculty select the candidates based on their academic and previous research records, among other criteria," Raman added.

For instance, while promoting its summer research programme, IIT-M encourages "candidates with an outstanding academic background in terms of good ranks in university examinations" to apply.

"The internship is designed to enhance awareness and interest in high-quality academic research among young engineering, management, sciences and humanities students through a goal-oriented summer mini-project undertaken at IIT-Madras," the institute stated.

The programme at IIT-M has set candidates pursuing the third year of BE/BTech-/BSc/Integrated ME/MTech programmes as well as the first year of ME/MTech/MSc/MA and MBA as eligible to apply.