

Swimming against the current



Lab for Ph.D. students at IIT Gandhinagar.

Besides its ingenious students, even the institute schooling them scores distinction going beyond its proverbial role. Amazing, eh?

The Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-GN) is one such having taken lead in launching refreshingly new programmes which seek to better equip the students.

Its Start Early Ph.D. Programme has set a new prec-

edent in the academia. The visionary Board of Governors of the IIT-GN thought it wise to offer Ph.D. fellowships to B.Tech. final year students in order to promote scientific research and help brilliant students explore the world of doctorates with its able guides.

The programme is drawing the best of brilliant students from across India especially IITS, NITs and also select colleges. Happily there

are 26 such doctoral students with IIT-GN today while one Vrutang Sah, who initially enrolled in 2012, has finished with it.

Since the Ph.D. programme is offered to the B.Tech. students, the institute is very selective about it. The students selected for the programme are mostly the top five rank holders in their department at the end of their third year.

The rigorous selection

procedure is reflected in the fact that in their 2017-18 cycle, the ratio was 1 out of 129.

Explains Prof. Nithin George, Associate Dean for the Post-graduate Studies;

“We initially short-list 20 per cent of the candidates. Then the written test and interview follow. We select the most brilliant and give them the exposure. The rest will be then taken care of considering the exceptional merits of the students.”

Interestingly the students selected for the programme are mostly from first generation IITs, namely IIT Mumbai, Madras, Kanpur and Kharagpur. In the year 2017-18 such students were about 22 per cent of the total students enrolled that year.

The institute also offers fellowship to the tune of Rs.35,000/- to the B.Tech. students who have passed GATE (Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering) and Rs.25,000/- to those even without GATE with Cumulative Performance Index of 6-0 in the third year.

Thus, the doctoral programme is made available even to the students without GATE, breaking away with the academic tradition.

Thanks to the novel IIT-GN initiative, students like NIT (National Institute of Technology) topper from Agartala, Sankha Subhra Bhattacharjee and Rajendra Nagar, overall topper from IIT, Jodhpur have joined the



Associate Dean, Prof. Nithin.



Rajendra Nagar, Ph.D. student.

Ph.D. programme.

Why start an early programme

To fight the dearth of promising Ph.D. scholars, the IIT-GN took this bold measure of offering the programme to the B.Tech stu-

dents. It is the first such IIT to do it.

“Largely, the B.Tech. graduates would get lured to go for jobs and the rest would go for their M.Tech. Even among those who prefer M.Tech., very few go for

Ph.D. Therefore, we thought of offering opportunity to the B.Tech.students to explore the world of Ph.D. with us,” explains Prof. Nithin.

Scientific research is an exciting academic arena and the IIT-GN, therefore, decided to rope in young students by creating research opportunities for them.

The budding young engineers come to IIT-GN from various engineering branches. Once enrolled, the institute drafts them on the fast-track mode of cutting-edge technological research to prepare them eventually to contribute in the process of

nation building.

All guides for the Ph.D. programme are from IIT-GN well-distinguished in their disciplines. Some are not even from their parent discipline, which means they did their doctorate in areas other than their specialization at the postgraduate level. Fourteen per cent of the Ph.D. students here have guides who are not from their parent disciplines, which they call porous disciplines. IIT-GN has also designed Overseas Research Exposure Programme for the Ph.D. students under which the students can spend 4 to 6

months at an overseas university. The stay is either funded by IIT-GN or by external fellowships for doctoral students. Under this, 43 students have been hosted in Brazil, Canada, France, Israel, Japan, U.K. and U.S.A.

How about placement?

“Our students don’t worry about that as they are skilled enough. They will get it on their own. They don’t think about money. It will come later,” says Prof. Nithin.

And rightly so. What matters is igniting the young minds to work for research that essentially forms the wealth of the nation. ♦

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