

Eye on Gen Y: How new IITs are building their brand

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NEW DELHI: IIT [Gandhinagar](#) is wooing the new generation of students, and wants to connect better with them. It believes in giving freedom to its students by treating them like adults, said its director, SK Jain.

"There is no policing on campus. Our students are allowed to define their own limitations. We do not keep tabs on their movements within the campus; neither do we track their attendance," he added.



Like the Gandhinagar institute, the other new Indian Institutes of Technology — established after 2008 — are undertaking a brand-building exercise to differentiate themselves from each other, each hoping its brand clicks with potential students.

There are 11 new IITs, and they compete with their older, more established counterparts for attracting top-ranking students.

IIT Indore has revamped its BTech curriculum to give its students more time for research projects. IIT Patna and IIT [Mandi](#) are trying to integrate some of their courses with the heritage and culture of [Bihar](#) and [Himachal Pradesh](#), respectively. All these initiatives are an attempt to stand out in a herd of now 18 IITs.

[IIT Madras](#) is doing all it can to give a 'serious' tag to the new IITs — Palakkad and Tirupati, in contrast with IIT Gandhinagar's no-policing policy.

Most new IITs have no restriction on the use of the internet. "There is an open culture. Our students have unlimited, 24X7 access to the internet, which is not the case at most IITs," said IIT Ropar director, SK Das.

The new IITs, beginning their first academic session soon, are relying on retired professors to meet the talent crunch. "Retired faculty is around 50% of total faculty at these two institutes. The remaining will come from IIT Madras," said IIT Madras director, [Bhaskar Ramamurthi](#). "It is the faculty that defines an institute and we want to ensure that Tirupati and Palakkad have the best," he said.

IIT Indore too is tapping overseas talent. Around 80-90% of the faculty is of Indian origin, and has moved to India from abroad. "I visit the US, UK and [Germany](#) on a regular basis to poach talent. It takes a lot of convincing but it's worth it," said IIT Indore director Pradeep Mathur.

Interdisciplinary research is being looked at seriously too. All 120 students in a batch at Mandi are involved in it from the very first year instead of the last year, as at a few old IITs. This means students from mechanical engineering, computer science and electrical engineering team up to work on a project from the very first year, said director, Timothy Gonsalves.

"IIT Patna will take seriously its original charter of focusing on interdisciplinary research," said Ajay Chowdhary, chairman — board of governors. It will also focus on Bihar's heritage.

IIT Mandi too is aligning some of its courses and research with the Himalayan region.

The new IITs are also partnering with foreign institutes. IIT Mandi is partnering with the TU9 institutions of Germany. Its students can go to one of these institutions for academic, internship, and research opportunities for up to a year.