

# Mandatory humanities subjects: IITGN's way for better career development

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IIT Gandhinagar (IITGN), since its inception, has introduced an academic curriculum different from those in other IITs. The institute has a provision of mandatory subjects in the humanities field in the first four semesters of graduation, which is unique. Although students and professors have contrary views on it, the agenda behind this curriculum design is to exploit the students' capacity to have a world view of engineering.

In the first four semesters at IITGN, students have to take one mandatory subject each in humanities/social sciences field: Languages (one mandatory), Economics, Philosophy, and World Civilizations. Unlike the other IITs, IITGN does not provide students the leeway to take a subject of their choice. Prof Jaison Manjaly, Student Affairs Dean, IITGN, says, "Engineering is a people skill and these subjects will help students in their professional practice in the future. Each course earns the students 4 mandatory credits, required by students to get their BTech degree."

Among the newer IITs, even IIT Indore has a system of providing two mandatory subjects in the first two semesters of graduation. However, post the first year, students are allowed to choose

one course from a pool of 5 subjects each semester. Prof Neelesh Jain, Academic Affairs Dea IIT Indore says, "We provide a minor degree in the elective courses pursued by students. Hence they cannot be compelled to study a subject." All other newer IITs provide electives to students most of them as stress busters, but mandatory subjects in humanities are rare to find. Students usually prefer the flexibility of choice. Anirudh Bhatt, first year student, IITGN says, "Since we perceive these subjects as extra-curricular, we'd like to take up something of our liking so as to serve the purpose of extra learning as well as recreation." Prof Anurag Sharma, Academic Affairs Dean, IIT Delhi says, "The idea of providing electives is not for serious learning or career related purposes. They are simply for overall personality development."

On the other hand, according to Prof Manjaly, the mandatory subjects provided in IITGN are meant to assist students in their profession. Electives for recreation or minors are provided separately. He says, studying economics gives students an idea of the economy they function and how to deal with economic barriers in their profession. Learning philosophy will enable students to understand people's ideologies and perspectives. At the same time, studying world civilization is important for students who want to take their engineering practice to a global level. Ajinkya Jain, a student at IITGN, says, "I am glad we have such a curriculum, since I'd like to gain skills that assist me in my career. Just as management is all pervasive, these courses are also helpful in engineering."

IITGN has hit a note with its mandatory subject provision which makes certain subjects relevant and imperative for an engineer. Students treat the mandatory humanities subjects as any other engineering related subject and work at it with almost the same efforts. As of now, it has metamorphosed the foundation of learning engineering from core technical to inclusion of soft skills as well.