

Exchange Report

National Law School of India University, Bangalore

Housing, Culture and Free Time

The National Law School of India University (short: NLSIU), is located on the southern outskirts of Bangalore. The university itself is located on a beautiful campus, which is very green and incredibly serene by Indian standards. The area around the campus is called Nagarbhavi which translates into 'well of snakes' in Kannada (the local language of Bangalore), and the near weekly cobra sightings on campus undoubtedly give a hint as to the origins of this description. Accommodation is provided by the university and along with food and other costs is included in the fees of around €500 for the entire trimester. Typically, you will be sharing a ca. 15m² room with another exchange student (usually from the same university) alike to other students on campus. Nevertheless, it is generally also possible to get a single room if necessary. The quality of the hostels are Indian standard but might not quite live up to European expectations. Another interesting fact is that the hostels are strictly separated by gender. In general the campus has all you need in day to day life, including several bistro's, cafe's and canteens serving continental and Indian cuisine as well as a variety of snacks. You will also find other facilities such as a gym, library, basketball court and common rooms. The campus area itself is surrounded by a wall and guarded by security, ensuring a safe environment. Nagarbhavi, the surrounding area which has experienced a boom over the past years, also provides for all services one could need in daily life such as liquor shops, pharmacies and smaller general stores. The newly built metro, which is located only 5 minutes by auto rickshaw from campus, serves as an excellent and quick connection to the hotspots of the city such as MG Road and the vibrant nightlife of Indiranagar, regardless of traffic.

The University

Within India, NLSIU is regarded as the best law school of the country. With a maximum intake of 80 students per year, which have to be among the 100 best out of 40,000 participating in the national common law placement test, studying here is a privilege and a glimpse into an exclusive club. Obviously, this also reflects into the classroom: my Indian classmates at NLSIU were with among the most intelligent and hardworking people I have met throughout my academic career, period. The way students engage in academics as well as extracurricular activities, organising India's largest college festival on the side, for instance, is beyond impressive. It is evident that the future

elite of India is being educated here, with many of my classmates already having job offers from the best law firms in the country before even graduating. Having said that, the expectations I had to face also exceeded what I had anticipated at first. With little prior knowledge about the courses being offered, we had the choice between 7 different 5th- year law electives and seminar courses. Every course amounts to 4 Indian credits, which can be transferred into 6 ECTS leaving you with 5 course selections. Given the fact that some courses overlap and that you are required to take courses amounting to at least 30 ECTS, you will not really have a choice in which courses to take at the end of the day. Furthermore, the topics which are offered will only be announced in the week of your arrival, which makes a prior course approval through the Exam department impossible. Each course usually will deal with a rather specific topic of Indian Law, such as drafting commercial documents, health care law and ethics or corporate mergers and acquisitions, to name a few. In my experience, most courses have been taught very well, with lively discussions taking place during class and giving me the chance to immensely deepen my knowledge in the common law system and draw various comparisons with civil law. Every course is taught in English, however you may struggle with understanding some older professors in the beginning due to their heavy accents. Within every course, you are expected to write an up to 5000-word essay on a topic of your choice (usually comparing legislation in India with your own home country), hold 1-2 presentations and take a final examination at the end. Additionally, 75% attendance is required for all classes and along with in-class participation contributes to your final grade. Although this may sound rigorous at first, you have to keep in mind that due-dates are a little bit more flexible than in Europe and generally everything is a matter of personal discussion with the professor or course instructor. There has not been a single day of the university where all classes have been held according to schedule, usually giving me slightly more free time while also teaching me how to adapt to changing circumstances.

This may however also be NLSIU's biggest flaw.

The Administration

Schedules adapt continuously and it can be very hard to plan ahead and it is naturally expected that students adapt to the teacher's needs and not vice versa. This can, for instance, lead to suddenly having a class on the weekend or an evening class from 9 to 11 pm. It also remains a mystery to me what the administration's function is, as they rarely answer e-mails nor offer any other assistance when it comes to certain questions such as course registration, grade conversion or other general matters. During the entire course of my stay I only met the responsible exchange officer once, who otherwise was busy or not available most of the time. There is also no central portal over which

students can access information on courses etc. and information regarding a course is usually shared within a WhatsApp Group by other students. Keeping up with the constant inflow of numerous messages and emails each day can be quite challenging and has made me nearly miss out on crucial information or deadlines more than once. In general most assistance and guidance is given to you by other fellow students and you will be assigned a buddy upon arrival, who you can contact in case you have any questions. Generally the classrooms at NLSIU are quite modern, however, the internet does not work everywhere and can be very slow at times and most power outlets do not work. These things are very small issues in an otherwise great university and which certainly also stem from cultural differences and habits, however, I often felt that they also obstruct NLSIU from reaching its full potential in certain areas.

Visa Requirements

Before leaving to India you also have to apply for a student visa. When comparing our visa types among the other exchange students we quickly realised that every one of us had received a different visa class with different requirements attached to it, although we were all enrolled in the same programme for the same period of time. My student visa was granted until the end of May, although the study programme officially ended on the 2nd of February. Unlike most of the other exchange students, I was required to register with the city at the Foreigners Registration Office which must have been one of the worst experiences dealing with Bureaucracy in my entire life. When registering you are required to bring an array of documents, some which are listed on the website and some which aren't. In total I spent nearly 16 hours or two whole days waiting in the Immigration Office to receive my residence permit. In contrast to my visa, however, my residence permit was only valid until the official end of the trimester. As I had already booked my return flights back to the Netherlands for a later date, I was a little confused at first but figured that overstaying my residence permit by a few days with a valid visa won't be a big issue. This was a big mistake. Arriving at the Airport for my departure flight, I was denied to exit the country due to my expired residence permit. What followed, were 3 more days at the Foreigners Registration Office handing in various documents etc. and booking (and paying for) an entirely new flight back home. Although I have spent some time dealing with the Foreigners Registration Office I can't really give any advice relating to this, as I still don't understand the exact procedures followed in this Bureaucratic lottery. However, just be cautious to not overstay your residence permit even if your visa is still valid!

India is definitely not an easy country to live in and can be quite challenging at times. I had to learn how to adapt to a completely different lifestyle and adjust to a culture which does not necessarily

always share the same views as me. Having said this, my personal experience in India has been wonderful. I had the chance to meet extraordinary people and make new friends along the way. I had the chance to develop my understanding and passion for different cultures. I had the chance to grow academically and as a person. In case you are interested in experiencing something completely different I can only recommend you to go on exchange to India!