

Top Law Schools in India and Abroad

The verdict is clear: while Indian legal education has developed at undergraduate level, legal education at the graduate level needs to be upgraded

Law is rapidly becoming one of the most desirable career choices in India, and this is in no small measure due to the advances in legal education made in the country with the establishment of the National Law Universities. Additionally, the booming economy has led to an increased demand for lawyers of calibre, and a good Indian lawyer today commands as high, if not better, a starting salary as peers from the IIMs and IITs. This story looks at the leaders of the pack in legal education, for undergraduate education in India and for graduate studies abroad.

The Best in India

In India, the last ten years have been the decade of the national law universities. This section examines

the top law schools in India for undergraduate studies (at the LLB level), and seeks to place them in a tier system. The criteria used for this arrangement are:

- Industry Reputation
- Reputation amongst Foreign Law Schools
- Peer Reputation
- Academic Standards/Quality of Faculty
- Performance at International Moot Court Competitions
- Recruitment Statistics
- Location
- Student Community/Campus Life
- Hostel Quality
- IT Infrastructure/Library
- Quality of Entrance Process

Based on the criteria listed above, the top three tiers are:

Tier 1:

The National Law School of India University, Bangalore

Established at a time when traditional legal education was perhaps at its nadir in terms of public perception, the National Law School of India University transformed legal education in India with the new five-year law programme. The college boasts very good infrastructure (the recently-completed Shri Narayan Rao Melgiri Library is the current showpiece), good faculty, a superb track record at international competitions (winner, Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, 1999), and a recruitment process that boasts of a hundredpercent track record and international recruiters such as Linklaters and McKinsey.

The National Academy of Legal Studies and Research University of Law (N.A.L.S.A.R.), Hyderabad

The second National Law University to be established in India, N.A.L.S.A.R. has more than given N.L.S.I.U. a run for its money. In the perception of many in the legal industry, students from this college are already pulling past their peers from Bangalore. With easily the best infrastructure among Indian law schools, excellent faculty, superb performances at international and national competitions, an industry-friendly administration, a Rhodes scholar in its first graduating batch, and a recruitment process that is as good as that of N.L.S.I.U. and N.U.J.S., N.A.L.S.A.R. is easily one of the top law schools in the country.

The West Bengal National University of Juridical Science (N.U.J.S.), Kolkata

An academic initiative of one of India's legal education pioneers, Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon, N.U.J.S. has, very early in its existence, come out of the shadows of its predecessors. The college has also made its mark at international competitions (winning the presti-

gious Willem C. Vis Moot, even before its first batch graduated). Its graduates have received some of the most prestigious scholarships at premier universities abroad, including the Felix Scholarship to Oxford University, and its placement process is at par with the other two colleges in the top tier, with international recruiters present here as well.

Tier 2:

The National Law Institute University, Bhopal

Modelled on the lines of the N.L.S.I.U., N.L.I.U. has excellent infrastructure, and is developing its student facilities further. Although there is still a lot of room for improvement in the placement process, the college has a good reputation at moot competitions across the country, and students have been accepted for graduate studies at institutions such as Harvard and the London School of Economics.

The National Law University, Jodhpur

N.L.U. was among the first to offer a choice of undergraduate degrees to its students (a choice that includes

It is the approach to teaching and the attitude to learning which makes the Law Universities different from other Law Schools. The way law is taught in the law Universities is different from the way it is taught at other places. The students are focused and there is a lot of peer competition which keeps the faculty on its toes all the time and the input thus helps in bringing good products from the Law Universities

—Ghanshyam Singh, Professor of Law and Registrar, NALSAR, Hyderabad

Cover Story

Ranking by Mr Diljeet Titus

Top Ten Law Colleges in India

University Name	Location	Ranking
National Law School of India University	Bangalore	1
The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences	Kolkatta	2
NALSAR University of Law	Hyderabad	3
National Law Institute University	Bhopal	4
National Law University	Jodhpur	5
University of Delhi, Department of Law	Delhi	6
Symbiosis Society's Law College	Pune	7
ILS Law College	Pune	8
The Government Law College	Mumbai	9
Amity Law School	Noida	10

Top Ten Law Colleges Abroad

University Name	Location	Ranking
Yale Law School	United States	1
Harvard Law School	United States	2
Stanford Law School	United States	3
New York University Law School	United States	4
Columbia University School of Law	United States	5
Faculty of Law, Oxford University	United Kingdom	6
Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge	United Kingdom	7
UCLA Law School	United States	8
Cornell Law School	United Kingdom	9
UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law	United States	10

REASONS:

Top Ten Law Colleges in India

The Top Ten Law Colleges in India are ranked on the basis of Law Colleges' quality of entrance process for admission, law library's strengths and services, contributions of journals, scholarly work produced by students, moot court participations in India and abroad, internship programs, placement rate after graduation, breadth and support of alumni network, and more importantly my assessment of quality of interns and lawyers at Titus & Co. who have graduated from the above mentioned institutions.

Top Ten Law Colleges Abroad

The Top Ten Foreign Law Colleges listed above have been ranked keeping in mind the breadth of curriculum of these institutes, average academic grades of accepted students including GPA and LSAT scores, specialized areas of faculty expertise, collaborative research opportunities with faculties, student diversity, student to faculty ratio, career placement services and employment rate after graduation, law schools' overall bar passage rate and my experience of working on transactions with attorneys/lawyers graduated from the abovementioned universities.



Diljeet Titus,
Titus & Co.

even a 'BBA, LLB' combination), and has made efforts at establishing a fairly good core faculty that includes experts in management, science, and policy sciences, in addition to law. The college has good infrastructure, and has had an above-average performance at moot court competitions in the country. Placements have been good (including at Allen & Overy, U.K.), but they still need to catch up with those at Tier-1 law schools.

The Indian Law Society College of Law, Pune

Set amid a sprawling green campus in the heart of Pune (the campus even boasts its own hill!), I.L.S. is among the oldest institutes imparting legal education in India. I.L.S. has had sterling alumni (three Chief Justices of India being among them), and student placements have been improving steadily for the last few years. The college also has a healthy track record at national moot court competitions. While academic innovations have failed to keep pace with some of the better National Law Universities, this may be because of the transition that the college has had to make from a traditional three-year system to the modern five-year law programme. The lack of an entrance examination process (entry is based upon scores in the school-leaving examinations) is also regarded as a disadvantage.

Tier 3:

The Faculty of Law, Delhi University

The Faculty of Law was established as a part of Delhi University in 1924, and has been a pioneer in the field

of legal education in India. Although the law faculty has not yet adopted the five-year law programme, and lags behind some of the National Law Universities in developing modern facilities such as access to online legal research databases for its students, it has some of the best teachers of law in India: the Law Faculty has always commanded immense respect. The Law Faculty has some excellent alumni, and is still the preferred choice for many would-be litigators in the Delhi and NCR region.

The Government Law College, Mumbai

G.L.C. was one of the first colleges of law in India, and its list of famous alumni is long and impressive. Although the college does not have a very strict academic regimen, its proximity to Mumbai's financial district, and to the Bombay High Court, works in the students' favour. The college also has a good reputation in the Mumbai legal fraternity, and most students start working as interns or clerks in law offices from their second year onwards. These internships often convert into placements and G.L.C.

is still a force to be reckoned with in the Mumbai legal industry.

Symbiosis Society's Law College, Pune

Symbiosis Society's Law College, colloquially called Symbi is one of India's top law colleges and is considered a great place to spend five years. The unique feature of the campus is that it is modern and yet traditional. The campus houses an excellent library and a computer centre. The students have been actively involved in co-curricular activities (Symbiosis hosted the Stetson International Environmental Moot in 2006). With the distinction of being the only law college in Pune to have started a placement programme, it is a popular haunt for law firms and major corporations.

The Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur

This National Law University had the benefit of advice from key faculty and students at other law schools when it was being established, and this shows in the good performance that it has put in so far. The campus includes an excellent library, and

even a heritage building. The young college (the first batch is yet to graduate) has performed well at national and international moot court competitions (the only Indian team to advance to the semi-finals of the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court competition.)

Gujarat National Law University

The Gandhinagar National Law University was formed on a structure similar to that of the NLSIU, Bangalore. Being the first law school in India to offer double and triple honours courses, it has come up well and has been recognised as an institute of excellence. Students of the University have been consistently doing well in National and International Moot Court activities (it reached the semi finals of Manfred Lachs International Space Law Moot Court Competition in its very first year).

Some of the other up and coming law schools are Christ College of Law in Bangalore, and the Army Institute of Law in Mohali. The two-year-old Christ College of Law, in particular, has grown rapidly on the back of excellent faculty and dynamic leadership.

The Best in the World

While undergraduate programmes at Indian law schools are regarded as among the best in the world, and considering the fact that it has become increasingly difficult for somebody with an LLB-equivalent degree from a foreign law school to practice law in India (the Bar Council rules and practices in this matter have be-

A great LLM programme comprises of a dynamic class with diverse backgrounds, cutting edge faculty, wide-ranging array of courses, a school environment welcoming of foreign students and an experience that ultimately helps students upgrade their existing knowledge/skills and build strong transnational networks

—Puja Sondhi, LLB (NLSIU 2002), LLM (NYU 2003), currently Chief of Staff, Teach for All, a Teach for America global initiative.

Cover Story

Ranking by Mr Lalit Bhasin

Top Ten Law Colleges in India

University Name	Location	Ranking
Amity Law School	Noida	1
Symbiosis Society's Law College	Pune	2
National Law School of India University	Bangalore	3
NALSAR University of Law	Hyderabad	4
National Law University	Jodhpur	5
The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences	Kolkatta	6
ILS Law College	Pune	7
The Government Law College	Mumbai	8
University of Delhi, Department of Law	Delhi	9
National Law Institute University	Bhopal	10



Lalit Bhasin,
Bhasin & Co

come increasingly difficult to decode of late), most Indian lawyers prefer to travel abroad only for their LLM and other graduate studies. The most popular destinations are the U.S. and U.K. though Singapore and Australia are rapidly gaining ground.

The most highly regarded LLM programmes, by jurisdiction, are:

The U.S.*:

1. Yale University
2. Harvard University
3. Stanford University
4. New York University
5. Columbia University
6. University of Chicago
7. University of Pennsylvania
8. University of California-Berkeley

9. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
10. Duke University

While considering U.S. law schools, one must bear in mind that they are different from Indian law schools in the sense of having developed a reputation for certain areas of law; the Franklin Pierce Law Center, for example, is widely regarded as the best place to study Intellectual Property law and Yale is revered for Law and Policy related specialisations. Indian law schools have not yet developed such specialisations, and are more 'generalist' in nature.

The U.K.**:

1. Oxford
2. Cambridge

3. London School of Economics
4. King's College, London
5. University College of Law
6. Warwick
7. School of Oriental and African Studies
8. Edinburgh
9. Birmingham
10. Aberdeen

Other Options

National University of Singapore (NUS) and Monash University in Australia are also preferred destinations for law students from the leading Indian LLB programmes.

The verdict, therefore, is clear: while Indian legal education has made enviable progress in undergraduate studies since the days when law was regarded as a poor country cousin to medicine and engineering, vast changes are required to the manner in which graduate studies in law are conducted in this country. The LLM in India must come out of the shadow of the LLB in order for the Indian law schools to compete with the leading U.S. and U.K. law schools in terms of research and scholarship. Till then, the popular combination will remain the LLB in India combined with an LLM abroad.



This article is written by Mr Sachin Malhan. He is an alumnus of the National Law School, Bangalore and is the President of Rainmaker Training and Recruitment (www.rainmaker.

co.in), a leader in recruitment and training for the legal industry. The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of the team at LST (www.lawentrance.com), India's leading law entrance test preparatory organisation.

*Source: US News.com, America's Best Graduate Schools 2008, available at: < http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/law/brief/lawrank_brief.php>, visited on November 2, 2008.

**Source: The Guardian, University Guide: Law, available at: < <http://browse.guardian.co.uk/education?SearchBySubject=&FirstRow=0&SortOrderDirection=&SortOrderColumn=GuardianTeachingScore&Subject=Law&Institution=>>>, visited on November 2, 2007.