



Tel Aviv University
TAU Recanati

The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration



The overall experience was very good culturally and academically. It was very interesting to see an India that very few Israelis have the chance to experience: the true full-time MBA experience with very brilliant people.

As per new ISB regulations, exchange students who are staying on campus for 2 terms need to spend one in each campus (the original one is in Hyderabad, the new one is in Mohali, in Punjab). It turns out that this policy is not strictly enforced, so if anyone wants to stay in the same campus, it should be possible. I strongly advise everyone to go only to the new campus in Mohali. The State of Punjab is where the population is the most outgoing and friendly, and this is strongly reflected in the student body. As a matter of fact, the campus in Mohali is very small (200 students), so you get to meet every student, and most of them are very nice, helpful, and very fun (We went out with them to Indian festival celebrations in the city, we organized a trip to Amritsar, a beautiful town at the Pakistani border, we had a lot of on-campus house parties with them all,...)In the Hyderabad campus, a lot less so. The social experience was much poorer. The student body is larger (500 people), and it has been quite a challenge to meet people besides fellow exchange students.

A critical factor in a good social experience is also to pick the right semesters to go. The 1-year ISB MBA is divided in 8 terms, each of 1.5 months. Exchange students can go for any 1 or 2 terms from the 5th term. I advise everyone to go there for the 7th and 8th term, if possible (starting January). I was there during the 5th and 6th term, during which all students are extremely busy with the placement (recruitment) process, which takes all their energy and all their time. Literally. Not a good time for exchange students to be around. From the 7th term and on, at least a good amount of them has already been placed, and there is a lot less tension in the air and free time for everybody.

There are relatively few exchange students, and everyone else is Indian, which makes it a truly Indian experience. But do not be misled. ISB is not India. ISB is the India of the 0.01%. Of mostly engineers and accountants who have accumulated 5-7 years work experience in the best IT companies in the country,

who all grew up in the same upscale neighborhoods of Mumbai and Delhi (probably from the same highest caste too, but I did not check, this is a sensitive subject still...), and who manage to pay for a one-year 40K\$ MBA. Something not quite enjoyable on both campuses is the isolation of the facilities. To go to the city (or just to go grab something to eat out there), one needs to book a cab or an auto-rickshaw, and travel for at least 30 min. Needless to say that every auto-rickshaw driver, like everywhere in India, will try to rip you off big time. But that is how things work in India. Know the price, and negotiate.

Food on campus is safe, but not particularly tasty. On Hyderabad campus, it is decent, on Mohali campus it is very bad. But there are great restaurants in the city, and you'll eat amazing Indian food in great restaurants for less than the price of a shawarma. Delivery options are also available on campus.

Academically wise, one should be aware that this is a world-class MBA, and that academic requirements are quite heavy. Of course it depends on the type and number of courses that you take (no more than 3 per term if you want to have a life!). Lecturers are good, some are excellent. The students tend to be brilliant people, so class discussions are of a very high level. The focus of the university is very much on 'consulting', but there are interesting subjects offered in finance, marketing, tech-related subjects and more. The grading system, unfortunately, is not transparent at all. One should be aware that a lot of time is spent studying, because assignments, group projects, presentations, exercises and quizzes are due virtually for every session in every course (almost everything is Harvard-case based). Regular students regularly study until 4-5 AM, but that is also because they never start any assignment in advance (that seems to be a universal feature for MBA students :) In brief, this is not exactly the type of exchange program for those who want to focus entirely on tourism. But there is A LOT to learn from classes and cases.

Asma, the coordinator of the exchange program in ISB, is unfortunately highly incompetent. Some exchange students had horrible experiences with visa and timing of arrival because of her. (She stays in Hyderabad, and her counterpart in Mohali, Gurpreet, is very helpful and competent. Another good reason to go there).

For those who have not been in India and want to travel (and have time), I strongly suggest taking 1 or 2 months off before or after the semester. Traveling during the semesters is doable, but distances are enormous in India, so weekend travels won't be sufficient most of the time.

Regarding visa, one has to take a student visa (from Tel Aviv). The trick is to get a visa which does not require a FFRO registration, but that is not in our control. Ask for a 6-month visa, not more, and hopefully the FFRO registration will not be needed once you arrive in the country. If it is, you need to get all the documentation from the school (from Asma, good luck with that), and deal with the Indian bureaucracy, which can get worse than the Israeli one (yes, it's possible).