

**NOTICE BOARD**

**COMPETITION SCIENCE MODEL**

**What is it:** A nationwide annual science project competition to encourage school students to think of creative ideas related to their everyday life. They have to innovate 3D models to interpret futuristic concepts. The themes for this year's competition are cities of future, water resource management, infrastructure to help avert and tackle natural disasters, waste management, machines that enhance human capacity and effective operation and safety of a nuclear plant.

**Who can apply:** School students between classes V and X.

**Contact:** [scienceproject@pidilite.co.in](mailto:scienceproject@pidilite.co.in)

**Last date:** December 15

**LETTER WRITING**

**What is it:** The Universal Postal Union (UPU), Switzerland, is conducting a letter writing competition for school students. This year's theme is how music can touch lives. An on-the-spot competition will be held on January 5 under the aegis of chief post master generals of Indian states. The top three entries will get cash awards and a certificate. The best entry at the national level will qualify as India's official entry for the international competition.

**Who can apply:** Students up to the age of 15 years.

**Contact:** [www.upu.int](http://www.upu.int)

**Last date:** December 21

**INTERNSHIP**

**TSING HUA**

**What is it:** A two-month research experience under the guidance of a faculty advisor from the College of Engineering at National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan — one of the top engineering universities in the world. Each participant will work on an ongoing research project or a new project interest. The programme offers a great opportunity with the mixture of cultural experiences, academic achievements, and social outings.

**Who can apply:** Any undergraduate or graduate student enrolled in an engineering course in a university.

**Contact:** <http://eng-en.web.nthu.edu.tw/files/87-1130-1057.php>

**Last date:** December 15

**SCHOLARSHIP**

**CAMBRIDGE**

**What is it:** Cambridge University, the UK, is offering PhD research studentship in pure or applied mathematics to Indian students to honour the memory of Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan who studied at the university.

**Who can apply:** Students of any university or a similar institution in India who have not already begun residence in Cambridge and who hold a first class honours degree or its equivalent.

**Contact:** [www.trin.cam.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=314#n](http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=314#n)

**Last date:** January 15, 2014

**GKS, SINGAPORE**

**What is it:** Singapore's Public Service Commission is offering undergraduate scholarships at local universities in the country. The scholarship covers tuition and other compulsory fees, airfare, annual maintenance allowance, hostel allowance and settling-in allowance.

**Who can apply:** Graduate students from Asia-Pacific countries, including India.

**Contact:** [www.pscscholarships.gov.sg](http://www.pscscholarships.gov.sg)

**Last date:** February 19, 2014



# Head for the Villages

India's hinterland is the new hotspot for the corporate world. Placement reports from B-schools indicate that companies are making a beeline for rural management graduates, says

**Avijit Chatterjee**

**G**rowing up in bustling Delhi, Dhruv Narang was always attracted to the bucolic charm of the countryside. So when he got a chance, he volunteered to work for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in a small village near the Sunderbans in West Bengal last year.

"I was simply bowled over by the kind-hearted people I came across during the course of my work in the Nandakumar block area under the South 24-Parganas district," says Narang, who was associated with Sabuj Sangha, an NGO engaged in promoting livelihoods.

The two-month stint in the village kindled in him the desire "to do something for the rural folk". So he junked plans to acquire a master's degree in psychology — the subject he had graduated in — and opted for a course in rural management.

"I found that working in rural areas posed a unique challenge. Also, you get a lot of satisfaction from making a difference to the lives of the under-privileged," says Narang, a second-year student of a postgraduate programme in rural management at the Institute of Rural Management Anand (Irma), Gujarat.

Like him, hundreds of students are opting for rural management studies driven by the desire to do something for the less privileged instead of joining mainstream management schools that churn out conventional managers for

the finance and technology sectors.

"For most of us it was a conscious decision to work in the development sphere as we did not want to be a part of the dog-eat-dog world of business which is mainly driven by profit," says Shobit Mathur, an electronics and telecommunications engineering graduate who also joined Irma. "I worked in the software division of a multinational firm for about a year but soon got tired of the monotonous job. I wanted to do something that was more fulfilling and rewarding. In the course of my search for a suitable career avenue, I discovered that rural management had better prospects as most companies were

turning to rural markets in a big way," he observes.

In fact, India's hinterland is the new hotspot for the corporate world. "Because of the saturation of the urban market, corporate groups such as the RPG group, Big Bazaar, Reliance and Bharti are foraying into the rural market," points out Anuja Agarwal, associate dean, rural management, WeSchool, a management institute in Mumbai.

She adds that many companies are also engaging with village communities to expand corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. "This has created a demand for managers with specialised knowledge of the rural sector. The e-choupal initiative by ITC, which enabled farmers to directly negotiate the sale of their produce through the Internet, has been transforming the lives of farmers in the villages. Even private banks such as HDFC, ICICI and Axis Bank and hospital chains such as Apollo and Manipal are spreading

"During the two-year post-graduate course, students spend about 30 weeks or approximately six months in villages, understanding rural society, economy and the extant developmental challenges," the director says.

According to L.K. Vaswani, director, KIIT School of Rural Management (KSRM), Bhubaneswar, the programme relies heavily on field work, with students spending around 40 per cent of their time in rural areas working with various organisations.

So which are the areas where a rural management graduate can find work? Students can opt for careers in agriculture (agribusiness, agro-inputs/commodity trading); allied agriculture (dairy, poultry); the non-farm sector (rural industries/handloom and handicraft); fast moving consumer goods; and the social sector (health, education).

Rural management graduates are recruited by government and semi-governmental organisations, cooperatives, banks, NGOs and companies.

If the placement reports are anything to go by, companies are making a beeline for rural management graduates. At Irma, 91 companies visited the campus this year, offering an average salary of around Rs 7 lakh per annum. The highest salary offered was Rs 13.50 lakh per annum. At the Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, 52 companies visited the campus, offering an average salary of Rs 5.62 lakh (the highest salary offered was Rs 21.73 lakh). KSRM placed 312 students in 73 organisations which offered salaries between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 9 lakh.

Despite the lucrative opportunities, life as a rural manager can be pretty exciting.

"The job requires extensive travelling in interior areas, sometimes living for days and months in harsh conditions. Also, you need to have loads of patience because you have to deal with people who will not understand any of your management jargon," says Baijanti Mallick, an assistant manager involved with CSR activities at Jindal Steel and Power.

**Rural roost**  
Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA)

IIM Ahmedabad

XIM, Bhubaneswar

KIIT Institute of Rural Management, Bhubaneswar

XISS, Ranchi

IRM, Jaipur

Vannicom, Pune

**MOOLAH MATTERS**

**ENTRY LEVEL: Rs 3 lakh to Rs 8 lakh**

**MID LEVEL: Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh**

**SENIOR LEVEL: Above Rs 16 lakh**

"To come up with such ideas requires an innovative mindset that can correctly identify the problem and then find ingenious

solutions meant for the rural sector," Agarwal points out. "Therefore, to be a successful rural manager, a person needs to develop a deep understanding of the rural sector as well as the needs, aspirations, lifestyle, culture and beliefs of the people living there."

"That's not all. In addition, a rural manager will not only need to protect the rights of the people living in rural areas but also empower them by giving them access to advancements in technology, markets and other comforts enjoyed by the urban population," she adds.

But rural management is not everyone's cup of tea. "Working with rural communities requires a specific aptitude to work on issues of economic and social concern," Irma director Jeemol Unni points out. Teaching combines classroom instruction with extensive field work in villages and internships in rural producers' organisations, Unni adds.



## Hello, roomie

**Moumita Chakrabarti and Paromita Sen find the best and worst things about sharing your hostel room**

**D**ormitories in college hostels may seem like cage-like boxes where you've been forced to share the space with a mate for the first time in your life. Living in such close quarters can turn complete strangers into the best of friends, or, if you're not careful, life-long enemies.

Let's start with the good bit first:

your roommate will probably be the first person you become friendly with — not "friends" mind you, just friendly. And in an institute full of unknown people it's always good to have a friendly face to wish you good morning and good night. Of course, if your luck is like that of Soumya Kanti Pal, a post-graduate law student of Burdwan University, you might never see your roommate. He says, "My roommate used to play video games till late at night. When he walked in I would be fast asleep and when I left for class he would be sleeping. So it was actually like not having a roommate at all."

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