



NALSAR University of Law Hyderabad

FIRST BEST PRACTICE

Interdisciplinary Academic Offerings

1. Title of the Practice: Interdisciplinary Academic Offerings

2. Objectives of the Practice

Legal studies are not separate from the meaningful study of politics, economy and society. In recognition of the realist approach towards legal studies, NALSAR has always emphasized the integration of knowledge across disciplines while designing its course outlines and the attendant readings. Since law is born and implemented in society, a deep understanding of law cannot be disjunct from society. It is essential to understand how they mutually influence each other. This understanding has to be cultivated in dedicated courses in law and social science as also a substantial offering of inter-disciplinary courses offered through the elective system.

3. The Context

Initially, the 5-Year integrated B.A., LL.B. Programs offered by the NLUs had a strict demarcation between social sciences and legal studies. This meant that despite occupying the same academic space, the interconnections between the respective courses were not clear in the minds of faculty and students. When NALSAR introduced the CBCS system in 2012-13 it reworked the place of the social science and humanities in the course curriculum. There was a 20 credits increase in the minimum credits to be earned by a student to be awarded the BA LLB (Hons) degree and 9 of those 20 credits were allocated to social science seminars. This mandatory enhancement of social science learning helped in breaking the disciplinary boundaries. This interdisciplinary insight has then been extended to the optional courses in the LL.M. Programme. The Management programs are also travelling in a similar direction by integrating business studies with social sciences. The integration has relocated social sciences teaching from its peripheral existence to the centre of the main degree programs. This new situation has opened space for inter-disciplinary conversations and the need to learn from each other. This is also an important objective of NEP 2020.



4. The Practice

NALSAR has always recruited teachers from the disciplines of history, political science, sociology, economics and English. With the enhanced credits for social sciences, the faculty who were only meeting the students in the first two years of the degree were also interacting with them in the final years. Moreover they became an integral part of the post-graduate and doctoral program of the university. The five year law schools had been established in order to facilitate integrated learning in law but before this change, the social science had a peripheral presence at NALSAR. In order to execute its vision NALSAR consciously recruited faculty members who had the temperament and the willingness to offer courses that emphasize the connections between the study of legal systems and disciplines such as History, Political Theory, Cultural Studies, Sociology, Entrepreneurship, Business Analytics, and Technology. The efforts of the in-house faculty was supplemented with a large pool of visiting faculty who were invited from other universities and academic institutions housed in the city of Hyderabad.

As part of this model, NALSAR invites scholars from other universities, practitioners from business organizations, and resource persons from civil society institutions. Given that NALSAR has earned a good reputation in the legal sector, several resource persons drawn from the judiciary, litigation, commercial law firms and research organizations have also regularly agreed to teach visiting elective courses. Over the last 10 academic years 18-20 visiting elective courses have been regularly hosted in each academic year for the law students. The Department of Management Studies has also developed on the same lines and hosts 8-10 visiting courses in each year. Offering such a diverse basket of optional courses allows for the cross registration of students who are enrolled in different programs.

The list of elective courses offered at NALSAR during the period under report (2017 -2022) demonstrate the success of this strategy. It is worth noting that NALSAR was able to implement a meaningful CBCS system before it was mandated by the regulatory body.

5. Evidence of Success

As stated earlier, for the last 10 academic years, NALSAR has regularly hosted 18-20 visiting elective courses each year in addition to 35-40 optional courses offered by our full-time faculty members. This has allowed students to explore their academic and professional interests in areas which were previously not touched in the course work at Indian law schools. The initial target was to bring in specialized knowledge both from the research interests of the faculty members and contemporary knowledge from visiting faculty. Each year NALSAR collected feedback from students and the visiting faculty so as to further



diversify and improve the range of courses that we are offering. Based on experiential knowledge, institutional practices were developed to better serve the needs of the students. The fact that the students were getting the benefit of a wide range of interdisciplinary elective courses has yielded results in terms of more admissions to postgraduate and doctoral programs at prestigious Universities abroad. For example, in the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, at least 60 NALSAR graduates were pursuing advanced studies in some of the best-known Universities globally. In 2020-2021, seven NALSAR graduates pursued the Bachelor in Civil Laws (BCL) Programme at the University of Oxford. This was the highest number of admissions to this prestigious postgraduate programme from an Indian Law School in its history. It was also interesting to note that while a majority of the law graduates were pursuing LL.M. Programs, many had gone into other areas such as History, Political Science, English Literature, Management Studies, Sports Ethics, International Relations and Public Policy.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The main challenge is to attract faculty members who are interested in delivering courses that have an interdisciplinary character. This requires some flexibility in terms of hiring practices as well as the ability to co-teach with scholars from other disciplines and also be aware of recent scholarship in multiple areas. Apart from faculty hiring, institutions also need to spend on library resources, hosting intensive research-oriented programs, and allowing collaborations with other Universities and organizations. Pursuing all of these strategies requires both financial support as well as open minded leadership. While some resources can be deployed from the fee collected from the taught programs, the institutions need to raise resources in the form of sponsored research projects, grants from public and private contributors, as well as support from employers and the University's alumni. While NALSAR has so far managed to diversify its course offerings, further growth in this direction will require mobilization of the kind described above.

7. Notes (Optional)

Over the last 25 years, NALSAR has emerged as a leading destination for higher education in South Asia. However, going forward, the institution aims to develop its capacity for teaching and research as well as a constant move towards internationalization. The interdisciplinary course offerings that have been developed since 2012-2013 give the institution the necessary foundation to proceed in this direction. For instance, the University has already hosted academics from several foreign universities through the GIAN programme (supported by Government of India) and a Scholar-in-Residence programme (self-financed). This has prepared the institution to host more teachers and researchers from across the globe to deliver courses and produce scholarship in partnership with us. In the long run, NALSAR aims to be not just a centre for professional education in law and management, but



also a site for producing original knowledge that is rooted in the South Asian Context but is relevant worldwide.



Prof. (Dr.) K. Vittalatha Reddy
Professor of Law & Registrar
NALSAR, UNIVERSITY OF LAW
"Justice City", Shameerpet,
Medchal-Malkajgiri District
Hyderabad-500 101, Telangana, India.