Quality 1-yr MBA helps both candidate & industry: Great Lakes' Prof Easwar Iyer
By Dhawal Kumar | 18 Oct, 2011 1238 hrs IST

MBAUniverse.com recently interviewed Prof. Easwar Krishna Iyer, Director Admissions, GLIM to know all about the PGPM programme.

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The Post Graduate Program in Management (PGPM) offered by Great Lakes Institute of Management (GLIM), Chennai is amongst the sought after MBA programmes in the country. Recognized by AICTE, the PGPM is the flagship programme of GLIM.

MBAUniverse.com recently interviewed Prof. Easwar Krishna Iyer, Director Admissions, GLIM to know all about the PGPM programme. MBAUniverse.com asked Prof. Iyer questions on PGPM Admissions Process 2012, benefits of one year MBA, acceptance of 1 year PGPM by the industry, qualities that GLIM looks for in candidates, and other relevant questions.

Read the excerpts from the interview:

Q. For admissions 2012, Great Lakes is having two cycles of GD-PI, one in mid-December 2011 and the second in mid-February 2012. Why this dual cycle? How will it help the Great Lakes aspirants?

A. For the last two years, we have been contemplating to have different admission runs for our GMAT aspirants and our CAT / XAT aspirants. CAT / XAT results are once-in-an-year events and come at the beginning of the calendar year. So the students who qualify through these tests are constrained to complete their application forms in all aspects only by January end. Hence the traditional February window suits them perfectly.

But the GMAT aspirant is a round-the-year test taker. It makes sense that he is given an independent window to apply. So by delinking the application windows for the two streams, we reduce the unnecessary bottleneck that we face year every year in January end.

Also, when the GDPI process gets divided over two cycles, the panelists gets a bit more time to evaluate the candidate’s merits. The aspirants also get more time to showcase his case. Finally, when GMAT and CAT/XAT are pitted against each other in the same cycle, we have to take recourse to complicated normalizing equations to bring the two dissimilar score tracks to the same ranking format.

Now with December being highly GMAT centric and February being CAT/XAT centric, that aspect is taken care of. Finally, a good fraction of GMAT takers are Indian students working abroad. If they come to know of their admission status by December itself, then they can plan their coming back to India better.

So, both for the school and for the aspirants the dual cycle works to an advantage.
Q. What type of student profile are you looking for your PGPM programme? With work experience or freshers?

A. Our PGPM program has always been aimed at students with work experience. The program is exclusively meant for those who have seen the industry at close quarters and hence the admission to this program stipulates a minimum work experience of two years.

In the recent years some batches have even recorded an average work experience of as much as 4 years. The students who have got enrolled into PGPM are those who - in the last few years - have seen and shaped the recent growth of India Inc. They have contributed in their own unique way in pushing the Indian GDP beyond the coveted trillion dollar mark. Now, they realize that their progress is at cross roads and a management education is the right prescription to levitate them to the next orbit.

Q. How does the Great Lakes’ one year PGPM programme compare with the 2 year PGPM offered by IIMs and other leading B schools?

A. This question has actually two components: How do one year programs differ in terms of value proposition vis-à-vis two year programs? & How does Great Lakes differentiate its offering in the one year space. The concept of the one year program emerged when students started coming back from corporate houses to classrooms. The traditional student was the grad school direct. He had no industrial grounding and expected management education right from the basics – the way his grad school taught him engineering or for that matter any other stream.

But the back-from-corporate student was a very different animal. He had some exposure in managing one or more of the 4 Ms – money, men, machines and / or markets. His aim was to prune up / round up - as the case may be – his semi-formed skills. The one year, fast track platform was designed to suit his aspiration.

Coming specifically to Great Lakes, we offer a complete platform to create what our dean Dr. Bala V Balachandran calls a ‘Business Ready Manager’. Development of cross-functional perspectives, curriculum that evolves in sync with the ever-changing needs of the market place, emphasis on inclusivity and value based management – these are some of the unique differentiators that Great Lakes infuses into the PGPM offering.

Q. How much is the acceptance level by the industry of the one year PGPM?

A. The one year program is basically an unspelt need of the industry itself. Hiring laterally for specific skill sets and niche requirements has become a norm across the industry spectrum. The concept of job descriptions, role profiles, skills vs. requirement fitments etc have all evolved with the non-commoditized lateral hiring. Rapid growth, inorganic acquisitions – related and unrelated, global competition – all this throw up challenges which require a complex combination of academic skills sets to tackle. It is into this rarefied space that a school like Great Lakes pitches itself with its one year program. So, no wonder, the industry acceptance has been quite good.

Q. What are the key benefits of pursuing one year MBA in general, and specifically from Great Lakes?

A. The comparison strictly is not between the one year vs. two year formats, since the target market for the two programs are more or less mutually exclusive groups.

The magical number of 24 months’ work experience happens to be the lower cut off for our one year program and simultaneously the upper cutoff for the two year program. The aspirations of these two broad student communities are very different. Hence the accrued benefits are also in variance.

Some of the key benefits are: Lesser opportunity cost (they are back in the earning saddle after one year), fast track exposure, excellent peer interaction in classrooms – every class room is a consortium of every possible industry in India in miniature – these are some of the holistic value propositions of Great Lakes.
Q. It is often mentioned by recruiters that MBA students passing out from B schools are not industry ready. What key changes have you made in your PGPM curriculum and pedagogy to make students industry ready?

A. At Great Lakes, we fully understand the present day corporate requirement of hiring managers, who hit the road running from day zero. The buzz line in HR circles today is – hire for attitude and train for skills!

Great Lakes realizes this new age corporate mantra at the admissions stage itself. As Admissions Director for the school, my key request to my pan-India admissions panelists is to check for the right attitude at the entry gate itself. It is not that we defocus on substance. Our CAT and GMAT cutoffs are comparable to the best schools in the country. Yet, by capturing the winning attitude element at the first gate itself, we create for our students the marginal advantage of moving faster towards business readiness. I have already explained some of the salient differentiators that enables the Great Laker to be closer to industry’s expectation. Our curriculum is highly case study driven and the experiential learning that he has gained will act as a blessing when he embarks on his second corporate journey.

Great Lakes offers varied range of electives which help the individual student to specialize in his chosen stream – be it finance, marketing, operations or strategy. Innovative thinking, global perspective development and ethical dilemma management – all these are interwoven into the pedagogy.