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# Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)

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The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are public institutes that teach engineering and related subjects. They also carry out research.

India has **23 IITs** in the 2026 joint seat-allocation system. Kharagpur was the first IIT, opened in **1951**. Their shared legal status comes from the **Institutes of Technology Act, 1961**, as amended.

Sources: josaa.nic.in; iitkgp.ac.in; iitk.ac.in

## 1. How did the IIT network begin?

### Kharagpur: remember the formal opening year

**IIT Kharagpur** was formally opened on **18 August 1951**. India's education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, opened the institute.

The institute began its journey in the former Hijli Detention Camp. A place associated with imprisonment became a place for technical learning. The formal opening year is the standard answer when an exam asks about the first IIT's founding.

Do not confuse **1951** with **1961**. The first identifies Kharagpur's formal opening. The second identifies the law governing the IIT system.

Sources: iitkgp.ac.in; iitk.ac.in




IIT Kharagpur's main building. Photo: Ambuj Saxena, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.5. Original photograph, displayed to fit.

## Which IIT received US support?

**IIT Kanpur** received expert help from a consortium of **nine US institutes**. The Kanpur Indo-American Programme ran during **1962–1972**. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was among the members.

Keep the two stories separate. Kharagpur was the first IIT. Kanpur received this particular US group's help. The consortium story does not explain Kharagpur's founding.

Sources: iitk.ac.in; iitkgp.ac.in

**Quick check 1.** Check 1: IIT Kharagpur was opened in 1961. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

### What does “old IITs” mean?

The familiar group of seven IITs includes **Kharagpur, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Delhi, Guwahati and Roorkee**. The term old IITs groups institutes by age. It is not a rank set by law.

The network still contained seven IITs in **2004**. Expansion brought the total to **23 by 2016**. Therefore, **16 IITs joined the network** beyond the earlier seven.

Joining the IIT system does not always mean starting a new college. An older institute can receive IIT status. Roorkee provides a clear example.

Sources: iitsystem.ac.in; iitr.ac.in; josaa.nic.in

## 2. What do the IITs share under law?

### One statutory framework, separate institutions

The **Institutes of Technology Act, 1961** declares the covered institutes to be **institutions of national importance**. Later amendments extended the framework as the network expanded.

The Act gives institutes powers to teach, conduct research and award degrees. Each IIT has its own bodies set up under the Act. The Board of Governors oversees the IIT’s affairs. The Senate handles teaching and exams, including course standards and exam rules.

**Autonomy means the power to make choices within the legal framework.** It does not mean freedom from the law or full freedom over every entry rule. Grants from the Centre and checks under law can coexist with freedom to shape courses.

For example, an institute can shape courses through the Senate. Admission to many first-degree courses still follows the common examination and seat allotment.

Sources: iitk.ac.in; jeeadv.ac.in

**Legal status**National importance under the Act.
**Each IIT's choices**Authorities manage teaching and day-to-day work.
**Measured performance**Rankings compare specified indicators.
The law sets status and powers. A ranking measures performance using chosen indicators. Sharing legal status does not require every institute to receive the same ranking.

> **Quick check 2.** Check 2: Every IIT must have the same ranking because its legal status is shared. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

# 3. How does undergraduate admission work?

## Examination, eligibility and seat allocation are separate

**Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Advanced** is the examination used for the main IIT undergraduate admission route. For Indian candidates, eligibility normally includes being among the top group of students in JEE Main.

JEE Advanced also has other entry rules. These include rules on exam attempts, school-leaving exams and earlier IIT admission. Routes for foreign students have separate provisions. Do not reduce the entry rules to passing JEE Main alone.

The **Joint Seat Allocation Authority (JoSAA)** runs joint seat allotment. Students with a valid rank must register and fill their course choices. Allotment then depends on rank, choices, category and seats on offer.

A valid rank lets a student take part. It does not guarantee a chosen IIT or branch. Class XII marks and document checks also matter.

Sources: jeeadv.ac.in

**Meet eligibility**Check the applicable JEE Advanced conditions.
**Secure a rank**Qualify in JEE Advanced.
**Use JoSAA**Register, choose programmes and follow allotment rules.
Each step has a different purpose. The examination establishes a rank. JoSAA uses ranks and submitted choices to allocate available seats.

## Why must a seat total carry a year?

The approved IIT intake in the **2025** report was **18,160**. That is a dated seat limit, rather than a fixed total for all years.

Intake can change when institutes add programmes or alter approved intake. Approved intake and seats given out can also differ. Use the current year's published seat matrix when choosing a course.

For example, a student comparing two branches needs each branch's seats and entry rules. A national total alone cannot show whether either branch still has seats.

Sources: jeeadv.ac.in; josaa.nic.in

> **Quick check 3.** Check 3: A JEE Advanced rank guarantees admission to the candidate's preferred branch. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

## 4. Which distinctions are easy to confuse?

### Oldest institution does not mean first IIT

Roorkee's engineering college began in **1847**. It became the **University of Roorkee in 1949**. It received IIT status in **2001**.

Roorkee therefore has college roots older than Kharagpur's. Kharagpur remains the first institution opened as an IIT. The answer depends on whether a question asks about the college's founding or IIT status.

Roorkee did not spend over **150 years** as the University of Roorkee. Its time as a university ran from 1949 to 2001. The longer history includes its earlier college period.

Sources: iitr.ac.in; iitkgp.ac.in

> **Quick check 4.** Check 4: An institution can predate IIT Kharagpur but receive IIT status later. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

## Which IITs opened overseas campuses?

**IIT Madras Zanzibar** was established in **2023** in Tanzania. It was the first international IIT campus. Classes for its first school year began in October 2023.

**IIT Delhi–Abu Dhabi** is in the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. The campus followed a deal signed in July 2023. Undergraduate courses began for the 2024–25 academic year.

## How was the Mauritius initiative different?

In **November 2013**, IIT Delhi and the Mauritius Research Council signed an agreement. They planned a research academy in Mauritius. Its name was the **International Institute of Technology Research Academy (IITRA)**.

IITRA was to be a separate research body. IIT Delhi would give advice. It was not an extension campus of IIT Delhi. Advice means help with plans. Helping a research body does not make it an IIT campus.

Sources: pib.gov.in; pmo.govmu.org; indianexpress.com

An overseas campus extends a parent institute's teaching abroad. It should not automatically be counted as another separate Indian IIT in the JoSAA total. Check campus-specific entry rules rather than assuming every course abroad follows the same route.

Sources: iitmz.ac.in; iitm.ac.in; home.iitd.ac.in

## What exactly did NIRF 2025 compare?

The **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** publishes rankings in different categories. In **Engineering, 2025**, IIT Madras ranked first. IIT Delhi ranked second, followed by IIT Bombay in third place.

Always attach both the year and category to a ranking. Engineering and Overall are different lists. A position in one list does not automatically establish the same position in another.

Established institutes can accumulate facilities, skilled research teams and links with past students over time. Those resources take time to build. However, age alone cannot explain a given rank or guarantee a better course.

Sources: nirfindia.org; iitsystem.ac.in

> **Quick check 5.** Check 5: Zanzibar is in Tanzania, while IIT Delhi's overseas campus is in Abu Dhabi. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

## 5. Review your understanding checks

This score lasts for this page session. The five practice MCQs below are a separate activity.

## 6. Questions and answers

**Why can a newer IIT award degrees?**

The law gives covered institutes the power to award degrees. Those powers do not depend on having many past students.

**Does freedom to shape courses mean every IIT uses a separate undergraduate entrance test?**

No. Academic powers and entry routes are different matters. The main undergraduate route combines JEE Advanced with JoSAA allocation.

**What should I check before comparing two IITs?**

Start with the programme you want. Then compare its courses, labs and entry rules. A dated, ranking for that field can inform the comparison.

**How can I remember Kharagpur and Roorkee correctly?**

Think “first IIT” for Kharagpur and “older college roots” for Roorkee. Kharagpur’s IIT formal opening was in 1951; Roorkee’s IIT conversion was in 2001.

## 8. Practice: 5 MCQs

Apply the distinctions between founding, legal status, admission and overseas campuses.

## Practice MCQs

**1. In which year was the first IIT, at Kharagpur, founded?**

**A.** 1951

**B.** 1961

**C.** 1947

**D.** 1956

See answer ↓

**2. Which statement correctly distinguishes IIT Kharagpur from IIT Roorkee?**

**A.** Roorkee became an IIT in 1847.

**B.** Kharagpur was the first IIT; Roorkee's institutional roots are older.

**C.** Kharagpur was inaugurated as an IIT in 2001.

**D.** Roorkee and Kharagpur became IITs in the same year.

See answer ↓

**3. What is the role of JoSAA in the main IIT undergraduate admission route?**

**A.** It replaces all eligibility and document requirements.

**B.** It allocates seats through the joint counselling process.

**C.** It awards the JEE Advanced examination marks.

**D.** It turns every qualifying rank into a guaranteed preferred seat.

See answer ↓

**4. Which pair correctly matches an IIT overseas campus with its country?**

**A.** IIT Madras Zanzibar — Tanzania

**B.** IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi — Tanzania

**C.** IIT Madras Zanzibar — United Arab Emirates

**D.** IIT Madras Zanzibar — Nepal

See answer ↓

**5. Which statement correctly explains the legal status of IITs?**

**A.** The IIT Act provides statutory status; a ranking measures a different question.

**B.** The top-ranked IIT alone has national-importance status.

**C.** An IIT receives degree powers only after leading NIRF.

**D.** All IITs must receive the same NIRF position.

See answer ↓

# Answer Key

1. **A.**
   IIT Kharagpur was formally inaugurated on 18 August 1951. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad inaugurated the institute. The year 1961 belongs to the IIT Act. The year 1947 marks Indian independence. The year 1956 is not Kharagpur's inauguration year. Remember the first IIT through its 1951 inauguration.
   ↑ Q1
2. **B.**
   Kharagpur was inaugurated as an IIT in 1951. Roorkee's institution began in 1847 but became an IIT in 2001. The 1847 date describes Roorkee's origins, not its IIT conversion. The 2001 date belongs to Roorkee's IIT status, not Kharagpur's inauguration. The two IIT dates are therefore different.
   ↑ Q2
3. **B.**
   JoSAA allocates seats using the applicable admission rules. JEE Advanced establishes the examination rank. A rank alone does not guarantee the candidate's preferred programme. Choices, category and seat availability affect allotment. Candidates must still satisfy eligibility conditions and document requirements. Remember: examination rank first, allocation process afterwards.
   ↑ Q3
4. **A.**
   IIT Madras Zanzibar is in Tanzania. IIT Delhi's Abu Dhabi campus is in the United Arab Emirates. The first two options exchange the two countries. Nepal is not Zanzibar's country. Remember the parent institute and overseas location together: Madras–Zanzibar–Tanzania.
   ↑ Q4
5. **A.**
   The Institutes of Technology Act provides the covered institutes' legal framework and degree powers. NIRF ranks institutions within a stated year and category. Ranking first does not create national-importance status. A lower rank does not remove degree powers. Shared statutory status also does not force identical performance rankings.
   ↑ Q5

## Quick-check answers

1. **False.** Kharagpur was inaugurated in 1951. The IIT Act dates from 1961. ↑ 1
2. **False.** Legal status and measured performance answer different questions. Rankings do not follow automatically from the Act. ↑ 2
3. **False.** JoSAA allotment also depends on choices, category, eligibility and available seats. ↑ 3
4. **True.** Roorkee began in 1847 and became an IIT in 2001. Kharagpur was inaugurated as an IIT in 1951. ↑ 4
5. **True.** IIT Madras opened its Zanzibar campus in Tanzania. IIT Delhi's overseas campus is in the UAE. ↑ 5

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