

New Faculty Survival Guide to IIT-Madras

version 0.9

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The IITs were recently listed as one of India's achievements in the past 50 years. This exclusivity comes from having a seemingly unlimited supply of aspiring students and a limited number of seats. Over the past few years, IIT-M has seen a large increase in student to teacher ratio and it has become imperative that new faculty are solicited in a competitive manner. This is an attempt to document our progress as we find our way through the maze. We hope that it will encourage you to join an otherwise vibrant institution and support you through the process.

0.1 Recruitment

IIT-M is now ISO 9001 certified. Despite the absence of transparency, everything is documented, so request the document. Come armed with many photographs, many pages on a letter head, your favorite pen and a good sense of humour.

0.1.0.1 Possible positions

You can join IIT-M either as a visiting faculty or as a regular faculty member. A visiting faculty position, up to 1 year, is at the discretion of the Head of the Dept. (HoD), but still goes through the registrar's office for approval. A regular position is offered only after you attend a formal interview. Those who desire a regular position but cannot attend the interview can opt to be on contract till they are regularized. (The parallel tracks of visiting and regular positions often throw up anachronistic scenarios and result in duplication of applications and offers.)

0.1.0.2 The interview process

IIT-M is perhaps the most orthodox, compared to other IITs and IISc, in the manner in which the solicit and recruit new faculty. You are given a regular appointment (on probation) only after you

apply in response to an advertisement and undergo a formal interview process. The recruitment office gives you less than a month's notice about the interview date.

You are expected to produce all original certificates (tenth grade upwards) for verification, including any degrees awarded by IIT-M. The process will take up the entire day as candidates make presentations and take turns being interviewed. Bring a good book to read or ask for

- a visit to the department if you haven't already gone there,
- a visit to the campus housing if you plan to stay on campus,
- a list of facilities available on campus,
- information on start-up funds (IISc offers up to Rs. 15 lakhs)

The interview itself is conducted in a fairly informal manner and a qualified candidate will easily survive the exercise. The interview panel consists of 5 individuals, including the head of the department and the director of the institute.

0.1.1 The offer letter

The offer letter arrives both by email and by snail-mail. However, the forms that you are required to fill out arrive only by snail-mail. Keep an eye out for latter as the recruitment office will march you up to the registrar before parting with a duplicate set of forms.

The offer letter lists basic pay-scales as

Assistant Professor	Rs. 12000 - 420 - 18300
Associate Professor	Rs. 16400 - 450 - 20000
Professor	Rs. 18400 - 500 - 22400

with some mention of allowances. This is interpreted as a basic pay between the starting and the ending values, with a yearly pre-determined increment shown in the middle. The allowances work out as

Dearness Allowance	45% of basic
House Rent Allowance	30% of basic
City Compensatory Allowance	Rs. 300.00
Transport Allowance	Rs. 800.00

House Rent Allowance and Transport Allowance are given only to those who stay off campus. Dearness Allowance rate is revised by the Central government once in six months. As of October

2002, DA is 49%. Deductions on income include a Rs.100 per month professional tax (charged by the local government), income tax (see section on income tax) and faculty association membership of Rs. 10 per month (well, this is actually optional, but I don't know of a single faculty member who is not a member of the faculty association). There is also a mandatory basic life insurance scheme for which employees have to contribute Rs. 400 per month (this is actually a group savings cum life insurance scheme). Other perks that come with being a faculty member include a yearly book grant of Rs. 4000 and a monthly phone-bill reimbursement up to Rs. 750. The book grant is claimed by filing a claim letter once a year; the phone-bill reimbursement is also claimed by filing a letter (along with copies of phone bills, for completeness) once in six months, in the months of March/April and September/October. Your department office will help you with the form letters for these. The phone bill claim can include regular telephones and cell phones, but all the phones have to be in the name of the faculty member. There are other perks connected to sponsored research and consultancy projects. Visit the sponsored research office web site for further details (<http://www.icsr.iitm.ac.in>). Basic medical care is provided by the on-campus hospital, but one can also avail treatment at many major city hospitals and IIT will (partially) reimburse the costs. Malar Hospital (about 2 km from the gate in Adayar) is often chosen for its proximity and many opt for the prestigious Appollo Hospital. If you reside off-campus, you can avail the services of any government-service doctor who is also practicing privately. A major non-monetary perk is professional travel. IIT will bear the expenses of your travel to two conferences within India every year (to present papers), with better class travel for one of the two. Once in four years, you can also travel abroad to an international conference, provided you meet the journal paper publication norm for the previous three years. There are also several other programs that provide partial support for foreign travel and finally, one can charge domestic travel expenses to sponsored research or consultancy projects. There is also some provision for travel support if you need to visit a potential sponsor - take this up with your HoD and the two research Deans.

Is there anything else?

These are government pay-scales and non-negotiable. Your basic pay scale and the accompanying seniority will be determined at the time of appointment. As per rules, you need a Ph.D. plus three years experience to be appointed as Assistant Professor. If you have experience beyond this, you can expect to be given credit for it in the form of one increment per year of additional experience. There are restrictions on giving more than three increments at the time of initial appointment but if you can show the experience, you will get the credit; for example, I (PS) joined IITM seven years after I got my Ph.D. and I was placed in the Assistant Professor scale with 4 increments. IITM is rather strict in interpreting this. Other IIT's may be a bit more liberal and

relax the three year rule or count experience in a generous manner. Asso Prof requires 8 years experience and full Prof requires 10 years experience. **This needs to be filled out**

0.1.2 The big move

If you are reading this section, you have probably made up your mind to take the plunge. Take comfort in that you are not alone in this process. Given the current paucity of faculty in the IITs a number of new-hires are expected.

- Find out from the department (if possible from the institute) if there are others like you planning to join at the same time¹.
- Write to the Head of the Department you are joining for on-campus housing, if you desire to stay on campus. Refer to the section on the estate office for details on what you are eligible for and demand the best possible accommodation **in writing**, with a copy sent to the estate office.
- **Shipping - We need a temporary address that candidates can ship household goods to.**

0.1.3 Day of reckoning

- Meet the Assistant Registrar, he will direct you to someone in the recruitment section.
- Bring all original certificates : Ph.D, M.S, B.Tech, High School Certificates, Experience certificates and ATTESTED copies of the same. You can get them attested by any Professor in the Department you are joining.
- Fill all the forms they send you beforehand, so that you can just hand them in and get going.
- Copy the bond on a Rs. 10 paper. Use a blank sheet for the second page.
- It is a good idea to have with you 5 passport size photographs and 5 stamp size photographs - these are needed for the myriad number of cards you will get - ID card, Library card etc.
- Make a courtesy visit to the Dean (Administration) Office in the Ad Block. Sometime after you settle in, say, a couple of months after you join the IITM parivar, make an appointment and drop by to see Diro

¹AP and SP had the distinction of leaving the US from within 20 miles of each other, shipping goods on the same ship and joining on the same day without being made aware of each others plans.

- The Dean (Admn) will direct you to somebody in the Engineering Section Office regarding on-campus housing.
- Get a list of vacant apartments from the folks in the engineering office, so that you can see them, before you choose which apartment to take. If you are really particular, you can go to the engineering unit maintenance office at the shopping centre from where you can get keys to vacant apartments and inspect them from the inside before making your choice. Demand a D-type (900 sq. ft.). . .you are eligible for at least C1 type so there is no reason to settle for a D1-type (650 sq. ft). However, you may be given only a D1-type across the counter since all higher types have rules/procedures for allotment (more on this in a later section)
- Write a letter called Joining Report - you will be required to submit this to the HOD of the department you are joining.
- Bank Account : Go to State Bank of India, (near Gajendra Circle) and get a form to open a Savings Bank Account. Have somebody in the Department or Assistant Registrar's office help you fill the form. You will also need two passport size photographs for this exercise. It takes a few days to get an account, passbook, chequebook etc. So it is best you get this done rightaway. You need atleast 1000 rupees cash deposit to open a savings bank account. Apply for an ATM card. SBI takes at least a month to get you one.

0.2 Getting your house in order

0.3 Surviving IIT-M

This is an ever growing list of things that we learn as employees and residents of IIT. Most of it can be found in the collective wisdom on campus or in the Acts and Statues handbook, a copy of which is available in the department office and in the library. What follows is not exhaustive, but more of a survival handbook. There is also the other authoritative handbook - Swami's handbook for central government employees. As the title suggests, it is for all government employees, but many of the rules and procedures are applicable to IIT faculty since IIT faculty are also government employees. Every department office is supposed to have a copy of Swami's but it may be outdated. Swami's comes out with a revised edition every year and it may be worth having your own copy, just to know what all the rules look like.

0.3.1 Finance

The department caters to all financial matters within the institute. Located on the first floor of the administrative building, they handle pay cheques, billing, scholarships, grants . . . all money matters. (x8019)

0.3.1.1 Pay cheques

Monthly pay cheques can be credited directly to your on-campus State Bank of India account. A letter to this effect, with your account number, is to be deposited with the pay-bill section. All future financial payments will be made directly to the account.

The pay stub (computer print-out) will list all your deductions (but not how each deduction was arrived at e.g. it will have your total phone bill, but not the calls; you will get a separate statement - not from accounts - that itemizes your calls). Taxes are also deducted at source for salaried employees.

0.3.1.2 Provident fund schemes

The two possible schemes that allow for savings on income taxes are (well, these are not really tax savings schemes, but retirement plans)

1. General Provident Fund (GPF): A minimum of 6% of your basic pay is deducted as a contribution. The scheme provides a pension after retirement or for a nominee upon death of the employee. Membership restricted to faculty.
2. Contributing Provident Fund Gratuity (CPFGR): A minimum of 8.13% of your basic pay is deducted as a contribution. The institute makes a matching contribution.

Faculty can avail of only one of the above schemes. The money in your account, under either scheme, accrues interest as determined by the Govt. of India (9% per annum - Sept. 2002 rates). Partial withdrawal is permitted up to 75% of the amount, or up to 90% of the total if within 1 year of retirement. (Are withdrawal amounts taxable?) Withdrawal amounts are taxable, but the interest earned is generally exempt. One can also take interest-free loans from the accumulation. Well, it is actually your money and when you take a loan, the loan amount will not earn interest and this lost interest is your interest cost. There are also specific provisions to convert a loan into a withdrawal.

Technically, the GPF scheme is a defined benefits scheme while the CPFGR scheme is a defined contributions scheme. In GPF, you have a defined benefit (ie) 1/66 of your last drawn salary for

every year of service you have put in (maximum of 33 years). To get this, you contribute 6% of your basic pay. IIT contribution is notional and in the form of years of accumulated service; thus, your GPF account balance will show only your contribution plus accrued interest. You will get your account statement once a year, sometime after the fiscal year closing in March. For faculty positions, since Ph.D. is an essential requirement, you get five years of service as credit for having the Ph.D. Thus, 28 years of service will qualify you for the full pension of 50% of last drawn salary. In the CPF scheme, whatever you contribute plus the institute matching earns an interest and is shown as such in your annual account statement. At the time of retirement, the accumulated lumpsum is available to you. In either scheme, you can contribute more than the minimum to grow the size of the retirement kitty and also as a tax saving mechanism. There are also other related items like gratuity and commuted pension (worry about those as retirement approaches).

0.3.2 Living on campus

The choice of living on campus is a very individual one. We leave it to the reader to use his best judgement.

Pros

- Stress and pollution free commute to the department.
- Pristine campus with wildlife that is perfect for a morning walk.
- Easy access to campus facilities e.g. school, gymkhana, stores, banks.
- Direct billing of phones, electricity and water.
- Feeling of belonging to a community.

Cons

- Each employee living on campus will lose the house rent and transportation allowances. (1000 sq. ft. apts just outside the campus rent for about Rs. 7000 - Sept. 2002.)
- Old construction, in poor condition and a dependence on institute maintenance staff.
- Cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene can be a problem on ground floors. Water problems and summer heat on higher floors.
- With the greenery comes the wildlife.
- Absence of competition makes on-campus services (e.g. banks, gas, etc) sloppy.

0.3.2.1 The estate office

The estate office, on the second floor of the administration building, is responsible for all on-campus housing allocations. The different types of housing available on campus are

- **A - size? eligibility?** Well, there is only one of this type, at one corner of Gajendra circle. Eligibility - you have to be *Diro*.
- **B - size? eligibility?** There are several types of B flats of varying size and age (and hence desirability). Eligibility - Professors and the Registrar. There are quite a few more Professors than B type flats and hence, some have to stay in flats below eligibility (till they acquire enough seniority).
- **C - size? eligibility?** Various sizes and age; some C apartments (like those on III loop road) are considered desirable and many people are known to have passed up B and chosen to stay in C. Eligibility - Associate Profs (and a couple of others). Since some Profs are dropped down from B due to non-availability, C flats are alternately offered to Profs and Asso Profs. However, Profs can also apply as Asso Profs using their prior status as Asso Profs (and seniority based on their date of appointment as Asso Prof). There are not enough C flats to cover all Asso Profs and hence some Profs and Asso Profs drop down to the next lower size.
- **C1 - size? eligibility?** C2 also belongs to this list. The C2 flats are among the newest on campus, built around 1995-2000. They are also the highest type flats not to have attached servants' quarters. Assistant Professors and a handful of administrative staff are eligible for C1 and C2. Since some Professors and Associate Professors will be in this pool due to drop down, C1/C2 flats are offered in rotation to Ass.Prof - Prof - Ass.Prof - Asso.Prof. Profs are eligible to apply as Asso. Profs using their prior Asso Prof status and both Asso Profs and Profs can apply as Ass. Profs, using their prior status. Thus, Ass. Profs. have tough competition in this category and will need several years service before getting an apartment of this type.
- **D - 950 sq. ft.** Distributed between faculty and staff. **What is the allocation ratio?.** The allocation ratio between faculty and staff is fixed from time to time by the estates committee. The current ratio can be obtained from the estate office.
- **D1 and MOH - 650 sq. ft.** Usually occupied by staff and research scholars. Also used as transit accommodation for faculty. D1 flats are allotted on a weekly basis. A list of available flats is put up every week and allotments made at the end of the week.

As per the above criteria, all faculty would be eligible for a C1 type housing. However, with the shortage of such housing, faculty are allocated D-type housing.

The process for applying for housing is as follows

1. A circular is issued by the estate office (about once in 2 months) listing the availability. New faculty will fall under the C1 or C list (based on your basic pay). The circular is not widely distributed, so figure out where it is usually posted and keep an eye out for it. C1 and above types get listed mid-month while the D's come in the last newsletter of the month. Your department office staff can be of help here - let them know you are interested and they will inform you when the circular comes (dont depend on this alone, though). Make it a point to look through the weekly campus news where this announcement is carried. Department offices will get campus news on Fridays usually (sometimes Monday).

(Well, the list eligibility given above is not correct. Eligibility depends only on scale and not on basic pay. PS)

2. You have a week to see the apts and sign up in a register in the estate office.
3. Allotment is based on seniority. At the intimation stage, you can decline the offer (no debaring penalty as per rules dated 28 Aug, 2002).
4. Final allotment letter is sent to you.

Ground floor apts are rarely advertised. These follow a separate set of norms and get allotted based on medical conditions, aged occupants, etc.

(This is not quite true; there are fewer ground floor apartments and people who move into ground floor apartments tend not to move out - they may have a private entrance and a fenced-in yard where they can put up a garden - and discover that the beautiful deer can be rather pesky plant-eating pests. The conveniences often mean that ground-floor occupants often pass up higher type accommodation. Medical conditions including physical handicaps are handled on a case-by-case basis)

0.3.2.2 Setting up basic facilities

- Phones - The institute has an internal exchange (x8140) that will set up your residential line. On filling out a form **pdf of the form?**, you can avail of STD/ISD facilities. Request them for an internal telephone directory.

- Email - The computer center will set up your email account username@iitm.ac.in and a web page that you need to update. You can also dial-in to campus network (x5464) with the same username and password to access the internet or check your email. Many departments also run their own mail service. People often find it convenient to get both accounts and use one actively, while forwarding mail from the other account to this active account. **contact?** Head, Computer Centre is the formal contact; Dr. S. Jayaprakash and P.Y. Sreekumar are the sysadmins who can help you.

0.3.3 Evaluations and promotions

What are the guidelines on promotions? What counts i.e. papers, doctoral students, etc? There are no set guidelines (and I suspect there will never be). There is a fear that having set guidelines will result in people following the letter of the guideline rather than the spirit and abuse the system. Generally, publishing papers in reputed International Journals is the best bet; guiding doctoral theses can help in some circumstances.

0.3.4 Leave

How many days of leave? Under what conditions? What about LTC, sabbaticals, medical emergencies?

Institute has put out a booklet on leave rules; this should be available in the department office. Basically, central government rules apply, plus some special provisions for teaching faculty. Government rules provide 12 days casual leave and 30 days earned leave every year. Earned leave can be carried over subject to a maximum accumulation of 150 days. Weekends and holidays in the middle of a leave period are chargeable; thus, if you take Friday through Monday off, you will use up four days of leave, while taking Friday through Sunday off will use up only one day of leave. This is the prefix/suffix holidays provision. Casual leave cannot be taken if the length of absence (including prefixed/suffixed days) exceeds five days; for absence exceeding five days and for availing LTC, one must take earned leave. Since teaching duties do not exist around the year, special rules apply for earned leave for faculty. Every year, Institute declares a set period of 90 days a year as vacation period for teaching staff; this is usually split as 30 days in winter and 60 days in the summer break. Of this 90 day period, 30 days are working days for faculty - the actual days are self declared. Faculty can choose to take all the remaining 60 days as vacation and not get any earned leave. Every 2 days you work during this 60 day vacation period will yield one day of earned leave. So if you work through without any vacation, like non-teaching staff, you will get 30

days earned leave. There is medical leave which can be availed with the submission of a medical certificate. The duration of medical leave permissible depends on the medical conditions. Then, there is half-pay leave and even something called leave not due (taking leave when you don't have any to your credit). Practically, teaching faculty have enough to do even during non-teaching periods and don't use up all the leave available. Forms to be filled for availing casual leave and earned leave are available in department offices; on returning from earned leave, one has to file a form to re-join duty.

LTC: Due to budget crunch, central government has suspended LTC except for those who are having their last chance to avail LTC before retirement. For the purpose of LTC, one has to declare a home town on a form filed at the time of joining. One is allowed to change this home town declaration once during service. LTC can be availed once in two years to visit home town or once in four years to visit any place in India. LTC will pay the cost of transportation for the employee and dependants to the place of visit by the shortest route. Profs are eligible to fly to the nearest airport and others can travel by First Class or AC Sleeper to nearest railway station (Asso. Profs are eligible for First AC). The journey can be completed by road, by AC bus. For the purpose of LTC, a working spouse is not a dependant (unless that employer has no LTC provision and some declaration can be given to that effect).

Sabbatical: IIT provides sabbatical leave of upto one year for teaching faculty at the completion of six years of regular service (visiting appointments are not considered regular service). Sabbatical can be used to visit a host academic or research institution in India or abroad. There is a departmentwise cap of 15% of strength who can avail sabbatical at any given time (so, in theory, everyone can avail sabbatical once in seven years). IIT will continue paying full salary and you can retain your quarters during the sabbatical; your host institution cannot give you a salary - but can grant you a living allowance (what this means is that your offer letter from the host institution cannot offer you a visiting position with a salary, but can offer you a visiting position and grant you a living allowance during your visit). One has to apply sufficiently in advance to get the sabbatical leave and the home department is not entitled to any compensation - the rest of the faculty will have to bear the burden of the teaching load. The Board of Governors of the Institute is the sabbatical leave granting body.

EOL: There is one other clause under which faculty can spend time at other institutions - by availing extra-ordinary leave or EOL. There is a career limit on the number of occasions and total duration of EOL, but these can be waived by the Board of Governors depending on the assignment that the faculty member is taking up. This clause is used, for example, when a faculty member goes to another IIT as Director - or some such similar prestigious assignment. The home

institution (IITM) will not pay any salary during EOL periods, but one can accumulate service credit by remitting the appropriate share of GPF/CPFG to IITM. Since IITM is not paying any salary, there is no bar on drawing a salary from the host institution. One can use this clause to be a visiting faculty with salary at another institution. This is the so called foreign service provision, which usually finds a mention in your appointment letter.

0.4 Our wish list

To project IIT-M as a premier institute capable of attracting the best talent, it is imperative that we solicit applications in a competitive manner. To that end, we list the possible improvements to the entire process. Most of these can be addressed by either having a booklet or better still, requiring that each section provide a one-page sheet that lists relevant procedures and guidelines. The latter alternative ensures that regular updates are possible in a de-centralized manner.

0.4.1 Interview process and recruitment

- Make interview dates available at least 2 months in advance. Be appreciative of the constraints of foreign candidates, especially if they are expected to travel during the peak summer and winter seasons.
- Give the candidates their approximate time slots for the interview. Their time is as valuable as yours. Making them wait is in bad form.
- Do not make multiple requests for referral letters i.e. once for visiting positions and once for regular positions.
- Accept attested photocopies of documents and electronic copies. Definitely accept photocopies of degrees awarded by IIT-M. It is in poor taste to demand the original of a degree you awarded.
- Provide an explanation of pay scales and allowances in the offer letter.
- Make the system of seniority either merit based or completely transparent.
- Give the candidates a tour. Show off the beautiful campus and its tantalizing possibilities.

0.4.2 Post acceptance

- Single contact person in the administration to provide assistance with the relocation. The should have all relevant information regarding shipping, schooling, housing, etc with contact people and email addresses. Phone numbers don't work very well for out-station candidates.
- The faculty should not be expected to run from office to office filling out forms and writing letters. Human resources should schedule one day when all the relevant forms and people are brought together. Provide details about everything including contact information, not just forms that say you agree to the rules.
 1. A map of the institute - it makes the campus feel familiar.
 2. Pre-filled forms - you have already requested the details many times over. Reduce duplication.
 3. Joining letter all typed out waiting for a signature.
 4. Bond already on stamp paper - Newcomers are not familiar with Velachery, may not have transportation and IIT can afford the Rs. 15.
 5. Library card - rules and regulations to go with it.
 6. Finance - pay cheque, allowances, deductions, book grant.
 7. Estate Office - what are you eligible for, how does the system work, what will it cost?
 8. Computer Center - email address, web page.
 9. Services - Phones, Email, Civil, Electrical, Public Health, Horticulture.
 10. Gate pass - you cannot expect an employee to work without giving him entry. The cost of at least one pass must be borne by the institute.
 11. Rules and regulations of the institute - leave, medical facilities, provident fund, promotions, institute calendar.

0.4.3 Professional activities

Faculty are expected to conduct top quality research and provide top quality education. This is nearly impossible without an adequate support structure that is easily accessible.

- Orientation - How do departments work? How are courses allocated to faculty, how are students assigned for projects, how are graduate students accepted. Upgrade the faculty

list in the phone directory, on the website and in the notice boards. Who handles networks, laboratories, stores, etc? Respect the staff by introducing new faculty to them.

- Teaching - What cyclostyling/copying/printing facilities are available for a course? How are teaching assistants allocated and what is their role? What is the grading system? How do you modify course content or offer a new course.
- Research - What are the sources of funding? What start-up funds and laboratory space are available? What about contingency grants before the first project? List of contacts in other research organisations? What are the overheads and rules that go with projects? Can faculty charge a grant for consultancy?

0.4.4 Personal

Any good organization also caters to the personal development of its employees and his or her family. It is up to the faculty and staff to establish an appropriate forum for communication². Relevant information along these lines would include

- Staff club and gymkhana facilities - definitely need to consolidate the various gymkhana memberships onto one card.
- Schooling for children and extra-curricular activities.
- Clubs on campus - sports/film/music/hiking/photography/etc.
- Services - milk and newspaper delivery, metrowater supply.
- Public Health - horticulture and sanitation.
- Housing - on campus versus outside campus.
- Tips - wisdom accumulated over years of battling an indifferent system e.g. there are four types of D-type housing or ask the civil department to tile your kitchen and bathroom.

0.5 Surviving Taxes

Indian income taxes are very complex; even savvy people like IIT faculty often seek the services of a professional accountant or auditor - to just do their tax forms or even to completely manage the finances (like make investment decisions etc). These days, with the government increasingly

²Newsgroups are a great idea. IISc has a mailing list called Birbal.

talking of e-governance and stuff, there is enough information available on-line for one to do income tax oneself. The Delhi Income Tax office carries most of the forms and instructions at their website (unfortunately, the url seems to change). Every June or so, the finance and accounts sections sends out a one page form for you to fill and return, that they will use to figure out how much income tax to deduct every month. You get a one page instruction sheet to help you fill out the form - the following basically expands on that form. The following are current as of 2002, but things change every year. Check out the excel spread sheet (contributed by PS) in this directory.

There are two main avenues through which the income tax burden can be reduced - by using deductions/exemptions that reduce the taxable income and by using rebates that reduce the tax. Taxable income includes salary (including DA, HRA and CCA but excluding Transport Allowance) and also interest earned in your bank account, dividends from shares or mutual funds etc, any payments for JEE/GATE work, earnings from consultancy etc. However, under section 80(L), interest from bank accounts upto Rs. 12000 is exempt from tax and only the balance is taxable. The exemption limit is raised by Rs. 3000 for income from Government securities and UTI mutual funds. HRA may be partly or wholly exempt if you live in rented accommodation (not IIT quarters). The exemption is the minimum of (rent paid in excess of 10% of gross salary, HRA, 50% of gross salary). The Rs. 100 per month professional tax is exempt from income for income tax purposes. One is entitled to a standard deduction which is

- for income upto Rs.1,50,000 - 1/3 of income subject to a maximum of Rs.30,000
- for income of Rs. 1,50,001 to 3.0 lakhs - Rs. 25,000
- for income of 3,00,001 to 5.0 lakhs - Rs. 20,000
- for income over Rs. 5.0 lakhs - nil

A tax payer who is physically handicapped, blind or mentally retarded can claim Rs. 40,000 exemption under section 80U. Under section 80DD, up to Rs. 40,000 can be claimed as exemption for expenditure incurred in treatment, maintenance or rehabilitation of a physically handicapped, blind or mentally retarded dependant. Another Rs. 40,000 can be exempted against expenditure incurred for the treatment of some specified diseases or ailments (eg. cancer) of the tax payer or dependant under section 80DDB. The more useful ones are a Rs. 10,000 deduction under section 80D for premium paid for a mediclaim policy and another Rs. 10,000 under section 80CCC for contribution to recognized pension funds. LIC offers a program called Jeevan Suraksha which falls under this category. The returns are not so great, but since the contribution is from pre-tax income, the effective return is about one and a half times what LIC gives. Many people

find this worthwhile. To participate in this or other LIC schemes, ask around in your department. There are LIC agents who drop by various departments, looking to service such clients. Once set up, IIT will make a payroll deduction making the LIC schemes quite convenient. One other major deduction is interest paid on a housing loan taken from recognized sources; all banks and IIT are recognized sources. The ceiling is Rs. 1.5 lakhs for loans taken after 1/4/1999 if the purchase or construction is completed by 1/4/2003; else, the ceiling is Rs. 30,000. This can be availed only if the property is self-occupied. If the property is let out on rent, it will be considered an income source and a separate income/expenditure accounting for the property will be required to work out net profit/loss. Charitable contributions and such similar donations (for example, to Prime Minister's Relief Fund) are eligible for deduction under section 80G, with a ceiling of 10% of gross taxable income. Charitable organizations (like CRY) have special programs to help people avail this deduction. Once you take these deductions out of your gross income, you arrive at taxable income. We will generally fall in the highest bracketed - taxable income more than Rs. 1.5 lakhs. In this slab, the tax is Rs. 19,000 plus 30% of the amount by which the income exceeds Rs. 1.5 lakhs. It is time now to apply the rebates that reduce this tax liability. The major rebate source is Section 88. Contributions to PF (GPF or CPF or whatever), principal portion of housing loan repayment, the Rs. 400 per month mandatory group insurance, any LIC policy premia paid and investments in specified instruments aimed at the infrastructure segment all qualify under section 88. There is a cap of Rs. 70,000 on the qualifying amount, but the cap can be raised by another Rs. 30,000 for infrastructure investments. 15% of the total qualifying amount is applied as a rebate against tax due (so the tax can be reduced by Rs.15,000 by investing the full 70K + 30K). IDBI, ICICI and a few other agencies offer instruments under the infrastructure clause; once again, ask around in your department; there is likely an agent (maybe, the same LIC agent) who deals in such instruments and he/she will come by your office with the forms and pick up your cheque. There are also investment agencies in Adayar who will do this for you. Women tax payers are entitled to an additional rebate of Rs. 5,000 under section 88C. Applying these rebates (maximum of Rs. 15,000 or 20,000) on the tax due, you arrive at net tax due. For the year 2002-2003 (which the income tax folks call as assessment year 2003-2004), there is a 5% surcharge on this net tax; adding on this 5% yields the final figure for tax due for the year. If you do this right (and provide the relevant information to the finance and accounts section), your monthly tax deduction will be appropriately worked out. Bear in mind that salary for the month of March will be disbursed only in April, which is part of the next fiscal year. Though your tax may be deducted correctly you will still need to file a tax return which shows that you have paid all your taxes. There are agencies which will fill and file your return and there are also people who will file your filled return form.

You can download the forms and instructions from the website of the Delhi Income Tax office. The simplest form is called Saral (form ITS 2 or ITS 2D). You can also take the filled up form to the office in Nungambakkam and file it yourself.