

South zone tops enrolments in online courses

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Chennai: At least 75% of the 5.5 lakh enrolments recorded by the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) was from the south zone comprising Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry.

"In terms of both enrolments and exam registrations, the highest has been from the south zone," said Bharathi Balaji of NPTEL. A number of factors have been attributed to the high enrolment rates this year that indicates the growing popularity of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC).

In 2016, the UGC and AICTE had come out with guidelines allowing transfer of credits obtained from approved online courses to marks in regular courses. This move could have been one of the reasons for the push in the numbers, said NPTEL officials.

Another reason of this huge interest, especially from the south, was also attributed to the many awareness workshops carried out across campuses. About 80 such workshops were carried out in the southern states in the past year. Meanwhile, the upcoming session of July-November 2017 will have 116 new online courses. This is in addition to the previously offered 43 courses taking the total to 159 courses in the new semester. "We opened the portal just a few days ago and are already seeing many enrolments. While students seek courses for higher education, several faculty members too are enrolling to reskill themselves. When it comes to professionals, we are noticing cases where they are interested to change career fields or work on upgrading themselves," said Balaji. For example, there are many taking up technical English courses.

While the NPTEL programmes are available in various disciplines, the bouquet also has courses on new cutting-edge technology, which seek to improve employability options in the technical domain such as cloud computing, data analytics and machine learning. Courses such as networks and systems, fluid dynamics and turbomachines will help candidates prepare for entrance tests to higher technical education too.

Professor Andrew Thangaraj, NPTEL coordinator at IIT Madras pointed out that it is a great opportunity for learners across the country to access the IIT and IISc systems as well as experts from other reputed institutions. "This enables learning without boundaries. You learn what you are interested in, and get a certificate confirming your abilities," he said.

Enroled candidates can pursue courses spanning over four to 12 weeks. All courses are free, only the optional certification examination comes at a fee of Rs1,000.

The courses will begin on July 24 or August 21, 2017 with examination dates in September 24 or October 22 respectively. Last day to enrol will be the start date of the course. For details, log on to <https://onlinecourses.nptel.ac.in>.