

November 13, 2019

Response to report of the committee for the evaluation of Physics Departments in Israel

We Thank the committee for the evaluation of Physics Departments in Israel for its dedicated work and comprehensive report evaluation our Faculty and for its many positive comments. We address the main recommendations (section 4 of their report) in the requested table format

Committee Recommendation	Steps toward implementation (including time table)
1. Continuation of efforts to improve diversity (important)	<p>As mentioned in the 1. committee report we are already investing much efforts to improve the diversity in our faculty, but agree that much more should be done, and plan the following steps:</p> <p><u>Students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We plan to enhance our publicity focusing on females and minorities to significantly increase the applications from these sectors. We have already started with this year and will enhance our efforts next year. Already this year we have significantly more female applications. • Our faculty, together with the Israeli young academy, recently initiated a new programs “Reshonot ba’Mada”. The main goal of the project is to encourage young girls to study STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics) fields, by linking female scientists and students in the STEM fields with various schools in Israel. • We already started and plan to significantly enhance our efforts to attract students from abroad by combining publicity, personal connections, delegations of our PIs abroad, foreign student participation in conferences held in Weizmann and more. We will also improve our ability to evaluate these foreign applications by skype interviews, by funding visits of applicants to Weizmann and by better educating ourselves in foreign academic programs, grading etc. We are cooperating with the Feinberg graduate school and the Weizmann visitor unit to provide full and close support for our foreign students and their families in all aspects of life in Israel. Already this year we achieved a record high percentage of foreign students accepted to our master program and hope to continue and improve in the future. • We are modifying our acceptance procedure to ensure we evaluate more properly and without bias female and minority applicants using a comprehensive survey we recently held. This includes inviting for interviews minority and female applicants with lower undergraduate grades and preparing the committees holding the acceptance interview to be more educated to diversity (e.g. holding preparation

course for the committee members held by a sociologist specializing in gender, ensuring a female member in each committee).

- Combining the increase in female applicant sand our new procedures of accepted yielded this year a record high 25% females in our accepted master students, high above the national average for physic undergraduate students. We hope to further increase this in the near future.
- We initiated a survey among most of the undergraduates Physics students in Israel in collaboration with the Israel Physics Society. The survey indeed indicates very strong homogeneity in all parameters (gender, socioeconomics, ethnics, religion, age, military service etc.). Prof. Gilad Perez from our faculty and a sociologist, Meytal Eran-Jona are analyzing and studying these results aiming to find ways to improve Physics student diversity in Israel and in particular in Weizmann.

Faculty

- We started a collaboration with The Young Israel Academy taking two projects initiated in our faculty by Prof. Yossi Nir (female postdoc database and female PhD recipient data) under their wings as an Israeli project.
- Yossi Nir from our faculty is performing research (with Meytal Eran-Jona) on the obstacles to female physicists in the academy in Israel.
- On October 2019 we held in Weizmann a workshop on gender balance in physics in end-October with national and international experts on the topic (see details in XXXX).
- We will increase our efforts to support Israeli Female and minority Physics students to do their postdoc abroad as we strongly believe that a postdoc in a leading university abroad is extremely important for the development of a young physicist. We will rely on the XXXX and in special and very promising cases also provide direct financial support to the postdoc host.
- However, in special cases we will be open to hire new faculty without a postdoc abroad (as we did twice in recent years). In such cases we will provide special support and help for the new PI to travel for shorter periods to overcome the lack of international exposure and experience that the postdoc period provides.
- We have recently establish a new temporary position intended to "rescue" faculty candidates that did not yet get a tenure track position in Israel, but also cannot stay another year as postdocs. This position enables them to finish and submit unfinished papers from the postdoc, increase their international visibility and prepared a well though research proposal to provide them another chance to apply for a tenure track position. We currently have one female scientist in our faculty holding such position and plan to use it again in the future.
- We started to include diversity considerations in deciding who from the many applicants we get every year to invite to a "short list" visit and interview as we notice that for female/minority applicant the

	<p>application material may underestimate their achievement, standing and potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue and enhance our efforts to avoid bias in assessing female and minority applications by holding lectures and discussion in various faculty forums and ensuring female members in all our hiring bodies.
<p>2. Reexamination of faculty hiring practices, with a view toward broadening the research profile in the various sub-discipline (advisable)</p>	<p>Our Physics faculty is of modest size (about 45 research groups) and is spread by both tradition and choice over most research fields. This naturally limits the size of each field and indeed raises the conflict between trying to cover many sub disciplines within this field or concentrating efforts in few sub fields to achieve critical mass and world leadership. We generally agree that in some fields we should increase our efforts for broader research profile.</p> <p>Practically, our ability to select new sub fields has been rather limited mainly by the very limited supply of candidates, mostly Israeli PhDs that did excellent postdoc abroad. We strongly believe we should choose the very best candidates from this limited cohort, mostly based on their scientific excellence rather than their proposed field. Of course our assessment of such excellence may involve also our scientific taste and we should try hard not to let it bias our decisions. This includes intervention of Dean, faculty head and members of our hiring committee in cases where the relevant groups may show such bias, consulting with external experts in sub fields where we have no local expertise and encourage in depth, profession and open discussions on candidates especially in these cases.</p> <p>Recently our faculty was able to hire 5 non Israeli PIs and we are witnessing a growing number of additional applications. We are very excited by this relatively new possibility and are now trying to exploit it for directed hiring in sub fields we feel are missing and want to develop. It's too early to assess if this will succeed but we are trying hard. We are also investing a lot in making Weizmann attractive for non-Israeli faculty members and their families. This requires us to overcome numerous logistic, legal, social and economic barriers but, with the help of the Weizmann management and with a lot of local help from our faculty members who are all very excited to help we hope to overcome these barriers.</p>

Sincerely,



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