

## Here is how institutions may address gender disparity in Physics

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New Delhi, 09 March (India Science Wire): The gender disparity in the sciences impacts scientific productivity and excellence. The physics profession has among the largest gender gaps. The fraction of women with PhDs in physics who are employed in tertiary education countrywide is just 20%, which is far less than in, say, biology. That fraction further falls to 10% and lower in the elite research institutions, in leadership positions and in honours lists.

To address this issue in the field of Physics, a group of scientists from Gender in Physics Working Group of the Indian Physics Association has submitted its recommendations to Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Among the recommendations for institutions and departments it says that there should be work-life balance policies, such as child-care leave. Child-care facilities must be mandatory in institutions and preferably subsidized. With this, the “mobility schemes” should be gender neutral. There are recommendations on selections and hiring of women candidates which says that the criteria for hiring should be formulated beforehand, and no hidden norms or criteria should be used. To make women feel welcomed in the field the age-bar for hiring should be removed and the hiring process should provide full information on all the steps and time-line of hiring to all candidates. While hiring the candidate status, position or background of a life-partner should not be criteria. Hiring processes should have a wait-list so that ‘likelihood of joining’ is eliminated as a criterion in selection. Institutions should invest in diversity officers as observers on selection, hiring and promotion committees.

“Time alone will not achieve gender equality and therefore conscious action is essential. Closing the quantitative gender gap at all levels of physics practice is a necessary step to achieve equality. Apart from the societal efforts the commitment of institutional leaders is also a key to make progress” said Prajwal Shastri, Chair, Gender in Physics Working Group of the Indian Physics Association.

Further there are additional recommendations for Physics Teaching, Conferences and National Agencies also that emphasize on both societal and institutional support to potential women. (India Science Wire)

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