

NEWS

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Small Institute, Outsized Impact

The Nature Index 2019 normalized ranking for research quality puts the Weizmann Institute of Science in the top three, globally

“Size is not everything,” proclaims a *Nature* press release today. “Some smaller institutes are punching above their weight.” This statement arises from a new ranking conducted within the framework of the *Nature Index 2019* – a normalized ranking that adds a new perspective to the relative contributions of each institute. The Weizmann Institute of Science was ranked in the top three, globally, according to this new ranking.

While the standard ranking held few surprises, the normalized ranking, according to *Nature*, reveals a “very different set of leaders among academic institutions.” This ranking takes into account the number of high-quality articles published as a proportion of an institute’s overall output in the natural sciences. This normalization – which assesses the contributions of an institution to its scientific articles, compares these to the papers published in high-quality journals and to its total scientific output -- enables small institutes to be ranked alongside large ones. The index tracks contributions to research articles published in 82 high-quality natural science journals, chosen by an independent group of researchers. These contributions are drawn from some 60,000 articles published in journals included in the *Nature Index*, and compared with those in some 3.88 million articles tracked in a digital database for scientific publication.

The normalized ranking listed Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in the US, the Institute of Science and Technology Austria, and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel as the top three. David Swinbanks, founder of the *Nature Index*, was quoted: “The inclusion this year of a normalized ranking alongside the standard *Nature Index* annual tables is especially interesting because the ranking draws to light some smaller institutes that are proportionally outstripping research powerhouses and would otherwise remain buried much lower down in the standard rankings. The smallest institutions in the top ten have some common features: ambition, as disclosed by mission statements about striving to be the best in the world, interdisciplinarity, with the strong embrace of collaboration across fields, and in several cases, the backing of Nobel laureates.”

The *Nature Index* was published today in a special supplement. In the standard tables, the Weizmann Institute of Science also ranked in the top 100, and number one in Israel.

Institute President Daniel Zajfman adds: “We have known for a long time that size is irrelevant when it comes to excellence in science. For the Weizmann Institute of Science, striving to be the best involves attracting the best scientists and letting them follow their curiosity. Interdisciplinarity and collaboration across fields and across countries are simply part of our DNA, and we are proud of that fact. The *Nature Index* normalized ranking truly showcases the quality of top research, showing you don’t have to be big to be on the cutting edge of global science.”

The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, is one of the world's top-ranking multidisciplinary research institutions. Noted for its wide-ranging exploration of the natural and exact sciences, the Institute is home to scientists, students, technicians and supporting staff. Institute research efforts include the search for new ways of fighting disease and hunger, examining leading questions in mathematics and computer science, probing the physics of matter and the universe, creating novel materials and developing new strategies for protecting the environment.

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