

Report of the 38th ISYA 2016, Tehran, Iran

August 21 - September 7, 2016

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ISYA Director and Deputy Director

I. The Iran School

The 2016 Iran ISYA was hosted by School of Astronomy at the Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM) located northeast of Tehran. IPM's School of Astronomy is the largest institution for Astronomy and Cosmology in Iran. The school was positively received by most students and lecturers. The lecturers found their interaction with the students most rewarding.

In total 34 students from Iran and other six regional countries participated in the School. Gender balance of the Iran School was 17 males to 17 females. The Host Country did an excellent job in gender balance with 9 male and 14 female students! But the foreign students had a poor ratio of 8 male to 3 female students. The student composition (both Iran and Foreign students) of the School were 13 postdocs, 4 PhDs, 14 MSc, 3 BSc that we managed to identify. The 17 students with PhD degrees were the majority of the students and their areas of specialty were diverse but most of them tend to be involved with aspects of extragalactic/cosmology research. The diverse backgrounds of students presented some challenges for gauging the level of lectures for the Lecturers.

The list of astronomers at the School and subject areas are as follow:

Itziar Aretxaga	Active galactic nuclei (AGN)	1wk
Sudhanshu Barway	Virtual Observatory	2wks
Michel Dennefel	Instrumentation and Observing Techniques	2wks
Edward F. Guinan	Exoplanet, writing CVs, publishing	1wk
Coryn Bailer-Jones	GAIA, Statistical method	1wk
Ajit Kembhavi	Galaxies	1wk
Habib Khosroshahi	Dark matter	3wks
Eric Lagadec	Stellar Evolution, High angular Resolution Techniques and Observations	3wks
Kam-Ching Leung	Emission-line stars, seeking job & Graduate School Advice	3wks
Xiaowei Liu	ISM (Theory and Observations)	10dy

Sohrab Rahvar	Exoplanets (Methods and Properties)	2wks
Yogesh Wadadekar	Observational Techniques	1 wk

John Hearnshaw was on an IAU mission to Iran and gave a special talk on “Why Study Astronomy” at the evening Opening Ceremony. He stayed in the school for 1 week before travelling to the other cities.

II. Students Evaluation/Feedback

The Student Evaluation/Feedback (below) shows “2016 Iran ISYA Evaluation – Result”.

The student presentation exercise was scheduled on September 7, 2016 (the last day of the School). Some students turned in their Evaluation Form before the Student Presentations. Unfortunately, many students left the school building after the last presentation without turning in their forms. As a result, there were not as many forms collected. From collective discussions between students and lecturers, in general, it seems most students had a very positive impression of the School.

However, there were critical comments on the lack of observation exercises in the Iran School. There was a problem in securing the nights for a remote telescope time period and weather conditions prevented the carrying out of a lab session. Observational exercises have been a highlight for students at prior ISYA Schools. Future schools should provide for a backup plan in this area. There were comments that some of the lectures presented were not at the right level. Early lectures can be difficult for judging student levels. As described above, the student composition was dominated by postdocs, faculty members and PhDs students, while at the same time, there were 14 MS and 3 undergraduates! In the future, faculty members will be given additional information on student composition in advance but the attainment of advanced degrees in some countries might not reflect knowledge of some subjects.

2016 Iran ISYA Evaluation - Results

If you give a mark of less than 3 to any question, please add a short explanation under “comments”

Name (optional):

If you do give your name, we can interpret your answers in the light of what we know of your background.

Answer only one of the questions in each group connected by “Or”

General

		5	4	3	2	1	
The website told me all I needed to know	Strongly agree	5	6	1	0	1	disagree
The application form was easy to fill in	Strongly agree	8	3	2	0	0	disagree
Applications were efficiently handled	Strongly agree	7	4	1	0	1	disagree

Comments

So many qualified PhD students were rejected that their work is strongly connected and instead some participants were not related to this field,

Lectures

		5	4	3	2	1	
The lectures were the most useful part of the ISYA	Strongly agree	4	4	2	2	0	disagree
The time spent on the lectures was too long	Strongly agree	1	5	1	2	1	disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on the lectures was too short	Strongly agree	0	0	0	1	0	Disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on the lectures was just right	Strongly agree	2	4	0	1	0	Disagree
The lectures were at too high a level	Strongly agree	0	2	3	1	0	Disagree
<i>Or</i> the lectures were at too low a level	Strongly agree	1	3	0	2	0	Disagree
<i>Or</i> the lectures were just right	Strongly agree	3	3	3	0	0	Disagree
The lectures were well presented	Strongly agree	6	4	3	0	0	Disagree
The lecturers responded well to questions	Strongly agree	10	3	0	0	0	Disagree
I found it easy to get on with the lecturers	Strongly agree	7	5	1	1	0	disagree
The lecture room was comfortable	Strongly agree	3	0	3	0	0	Disagree

Comments:

I think lab time very useful and if that time to be more, this school be good. Sometime, the lectures were not compatible, half of the lectures were too low level and half of them were not! & I prefer for each lecture that we had some appropriate training instead of solving problem! Some lectures were too long and too basic while we would like to spend more time on some other lectures. The level of talks was very different from one lecturer to another, which might be due the lack of coordination between organizers and lecturers who did not know what exactly to provide. There were indeed some very nice and proper lecturers too but it was for only two or three lecturers. I think the lectures were not very useful for me. In addition, I think it would be better to organize more times for projects, getting familiar with software, observation (specially!). One main problem was the level of lectures were extremely uneven. Some lecturers were advanced technical presentation in advance fields, and some were extremely simple and at elementary levels (more suitable for high schoolers!) . The fact is that given ISYA had detailed CV and resumes of applicants, it could be well adjusted so that lectures would match level of participants – elementary or advance.

Observation training

		5	4	3	2	1	
The observation projects were the most useful part of the ISYA	Strongly agree	5	4	1	0	1	disagree
The time spent on observation was too long	Strongly agree	0	0	2	1	4	disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on observations was too short	Strongly agree	3	1	0	1	0	disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on observations was just right	Strongly agree	2	2	0	0	0	disagree
The lectures did not prepare me adequately for the observations	Strongly agree	2	1	5	3	2	Disagree
The computing facilities were good	Strongly agree	4	5	3	0	0	Disagree
The help I got with my project was adequate	Strongly agree	3	6	3	0	0	Disagree
I found the supervisors helpful and easy to get on with	Strongly agree	7	4	1	0	0	Disagree

Comments:

There was not enough practical work included. We expect all lectures to be followed with observational assignments, which only happened about one of the lectures. We expected ISYA to include usual observational projects, which it is famous for. We give theoretical assignments instead. There were no observation! We plan theoretically an observing night at the first week but never did a real observation. Not much of observation needed more practice in VO. There was no computing facility. I was deeply upset be we had not observation project. It was the worst thing there was not any observation time during the three weeks! We do not have a real observation training our entire lab times, spent be data analysis and computing. The lectures must be more experimental and use some example to help us in observational experience. They can be more practical and challenging instead of be theoretical and report lectures.

Presentation exercise

		5	4	3	2	1	
The student presentations were the most useful part of the school	Strongly agree	1	3	3	3	0	disagree
The time spent on this was too long	Strongly agree	1	0	4	0	0	disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on this was too short	Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	0	disagree
<i>Or</i> the time spent on this was just right	Strongly agree	4	1	0	0	0	disagree
This exercise was well organized	Strongly agree	2	5	2	2	0	Disagree
This exercise was interesting	Strongly agree	2	7	2	0	0	Disagree

Comments:

I need more programing exercises data analysing techniques. It does not make sense to give a presentation while most of the lecturers are gone! Could be nicer to present our work at the first or second week of the school to get know what one does. Different projects for different groups had very different levels and were very uneven.

Accommodation:

		5	4	3	2	1	
The airport transport was efficiently done	Strongly agree	4	1	1	0	0	disagree
The rooms were good	Strongly agree	5	3	0	1	0	disagree
The breakfast was good	Strongly agree	3	4	2	0	0	disagree
The meals were good	Strongly agree	5	3	3	3	0	
The organizational support was good	Strongly agree	8	4	1	0	0	Disagree
Generally, the ISYA environment was good	Strongly agree	11	3	0	0	0	Disagree

IPM was a good place to hold this ISYA	Strongly agree	11	0	2	1	0	Disagree
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Comments:

I am a local, so I do not fill related fields. In my opinion, it would be much better if instead of a two days of at the end of weekend, we had one day off at weekend and one off in the middle of the week which would be useful to keep as refreshed and active and would give us some time to freshen up during school. There were too much strong and unnecessary words forcing students to attend “all” secessions; maybe without these pressure we could attend the take anyway if they are good enough! Never saw this kind of behaviour in other international school! The meals mostly consisted of rice and not much vegetarian option. The meals usually “rice”. My guesthouse is very far from IPM. The food was not cooked perfectly e.g., kebab and chicken were always raw.

Cultural tours and leisure:

		5	4	3	2	1	
The leisure possibilities after the lectures were good	Strongly agree	5	3	5	0	0	disagree
The Sunday Aug 23 excursion was good	Strongly agree	7	0	3	0	0	disagree
The excursion to Painball was good	Strongly agree	6	2	2	0	0	disagree
The visit to the Golestan Place was good	Strongly agree	6	2	1	0	0	Disagree
The Tochal cablecar excursion was good	Strongly agree	3	4	1	0	0	Disagree
The school dinner (Monday 30th) was fine	Strongly agree	11	2	1	0	0	Disagree
Generally, this part of the ISYA was good	Strongly agree	5	4	3	0	0	Disagree

Comments

None

The future

		5	4	3	2	1	
I developed an international network as a result of this ISYA	Strongly agree	4	5	1	1	0	disagree
The ISYA helped me to better understand my actual research interests	Strongly agree	6	4	3	1	0	disagree
The ISYA encouraged me to strengthen my research in astronomy	Strongly agree	7	3	4	0	0	disagree
Through the ISYA I acquired a broader view on the research done in astronomy	Strongly agree	5	6	0	2	0	disagree
I have benefited significantly from attending this ISYA	Strongly agree	6	4	3	1	0	Disagree

Comments:

I did benefit from some talks but wasted much time in others! It would be good to remind lecturers in advance of the level they are required to give lectures on. Moreover, some relation between their talks and their exercises! I do understand that it’s extremely hard to organize such a school but considering all efforts made, it can be a lot nicer to take into account some critical (not necessarily hard) points. Thanks for organizing this anyway. We could have practice sessions on VO of cloud computing. The assignment on problem solving by Dr. Yogesh could have been less in number, since many students were only concentrating on them and missed lectures. Having the opportunity to participate in this School was one of the best things in my like. I found a great atmosphere in School due to nice lecturers

and LOC, I would like to thank IAU and IPM because at effort to hold this school in Iran. I think 3 weeks for school is long time! At the end, it is being exhausted. In particular, we did not have any serious project!