

Gender Equity on the Carmel

A Strategic Plan to Promote Gender Equity at the University of Haifa

2021-2026

The University of Haifa considers it of paramount importance to promote gender equity and create an equality-based academic environment with suitable, well-deserved representation for women at all staff levels and positions. This strategic plan will first describe in detail the data on gender equity at the university as of 2019-2020, and the detailed objectives the university is setting for itself for the coming years, in light of this data. This plan will also describe various mechanisms designed both to identify the obstacles preventing full gender equity today, and the steps expected to be taken to remove these barriers. It should be noted that the University of Haifa ranks well relative to other universities, both in terms of the general representation of women in the university population and relative to their representation among senior instructors and officials. However, the university strives not only to continue to lead in terms of gender equity, but to improve its statistics and strive for true and complete equality on its campuses. To this end, the strategic plan will focus on advancing the indices outlined in the Multiyear Plan for Gender Equity in Academia of the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE), known in Hebrew as *Kav Hamashveh*, or the “equator plan”, to identify the unique challenges stemming from those statistics and other data while developing appropriate responses.

The University of Haifa is already close to the objectives defined by the equator plan. The university has 571 senior academic staff members, 247 of whom are women, constituting 43.2% of all faculty members, and 324 male faculty members, who constitute 57.6% of the academic staff. The university has 268 faculty members at the most senior staff levels (associate and full professors), 95 of whom are women, constituting 35.5% of those academic staff members, and 173 of whom are men. The new hires statistics for this year indicate gender equality among newly recruited academic staff (18 women out of the 35 faculty members recently hired). The university also has good statistics regarding the appointment of women to senior positions. The university has 8.5 women serving in senior positions (vice presidents, school presidents, and department deans). In all, women fill 42.5% of senior management positions, as defined by the PBC’s Multiyear Plan for Gender Equity in Academia. The Advisor to the President on Gender Equity reports directly to the University President, and she heads a team that includes academic and administrative staff. Even with these positive opening statistics, thorough in-depth efforts are needed to enhance the gender equity at the University of Haifa, as part of the requirements presented by the equator plan and beyond.

Our goal is to show continuous improvement in the various quantitative and qualitative metrics of the program. The following are the defined quantitative objectives, from the options available in the PBC’s multi-year plan, based on the current data as presented above:

- 1) The hiring rate of female academic staff as compared with the current rate of women on the university’s senior faculty – the goal is an equivalent rate of parity as defined by the PBC.

- 2) The hiring rate of female academic staff as senior lecturers as compared with those being hired as lecturers – the goal is to reduce the hiring rate of female lecturers to the absolute minimum rate possible, while prioritizing hiring at the level of senior lecturer and above.
- 3) The number of women who are associate and full professors – the goal is to achieve an equivalent rate of parity between women and men in the professorial ranks.

Hiring and promotion objectives by year, for the years 2020-2025:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
% Women among senior academic staff	42.3%	43.8%	*	*	*	50%
% Women among associate and full professors	35.3%	42.8%	**	**	**	50%
% Women hired as lecturers	74%	50%	54%	50%	50%	50%
% Women hired as senior lecturers	34%	44%	75%	50%	50%	50%

* Maintaining the proportion of women in the faculty and increasing it to 50%, based on staff retirements and new hiring.

** Maintaining the proportion of women at these staff grades and increasing it to 50%, based on staff retirements and new hiring.

Here are the selected objectives from the qualitative section of the PBC plan:

- 1) Formulation of a gender-sensitive action plan for addressing the impact of the damages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (required).
- 2) Workshops for detecting and studying gender biases (required).
- 3) Designing a gender-supportive environment.

The University of Haifa has formulated various action plans to respond to this issue and meet the selected qualitative metrics. The response to these items will be provided as part of the steps designed to advance gender equity described later in this plan.

To define the focal points and junctions where real challenges exist for gender equity, as well as to strive to solve these challenges, the University of Haifa is working in two directions: Bottom-up and top-down. This plan allows us to examine the entire length of the process by which academic careers are developed. In addition, the plan enables extensive collaboration with all faculty members, alongside the development of broad initiatives at the overall university level.

- 1) **The bottom-up process** is designed to detect the obstacles and challenges facing women at the university in a systematic and focused manner, from the stage of writing the doctoral thesis until the staff member's appointment as a full professor. This process focuses on events taking place in the departments and faculties at the micro level. Actions in this process include, among others: collecting gender data by departments and faculties;

analyzing the data and the patterns that emerge from them; formulating a plan and unique objectives based on that analysis; one-on-one meetings with newly hired female academic staff every year to identify the gender-based obstacles they experience on a personal level, one-on-one meetings with female faculty members who are candidates for tenure and promotion to identify the gender-based obstacles they are experiencing at this stage and that they have encountered in the past; mapping and supporting the mentoring programs that currently exist in the various departments, and more.

- 2) **The top-down process** focuses on the macro level of the quantitative and qualitative objectives and the formulation of a comprehensive action plan based on changing procedures and advocacy activities at both the administration level and the overall university level. Actions in this process include, among others: Defining overall university goals to advance female academic staff from the status of lecturers to full professors; launching overall university initiatives to promote female doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers (including a dedicated scholarship program); workshops and meetings to advance gender equity awareness and skills for the university administration and the Deans' Forum, and more.

Obstacles hindering the advancement of gender equity at the University of Haifa: The obstacles described later in this report emerged as part of the bottom-up process that included collecting data from the various departments and faculties and in-depth, personal conversations with new and veteran female academic staff at the university. The obstacles identified are also reflected in the quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the PBC's Multiyear Plan for Gender Equity in Academia. Actions will be taken while improving the measurable metrics and working on attaining the objectives defined in the first part of the strategic plan.

- 1) **Obstacles pertaining to hiring process:** In the hiring and negotiation phase re the initial work and acclimatization terms, including determining rank, the scope of the recruitment package, and the funds to be dedicated to the research laboratory, a problem related to gender equity was identified. Women have difficulty presenting their expectations relative to both rank and other conditions, such as the scope of their research or laboratory funding. As a result, women are generally hired with less favorable starting conditions than their male counterparts.
- 2) **Obstacles pertaining to promotion:** As is the case in the general economy, in academia in general, and at the University of Haifa in particular, women often apply late for promotions, and sometimes even refrain from applying at all, at times without any justification.
- 3) **Obstacles related to childbirth and parenting:** The time in life when most people attend higher education and begin their careers is also the point during which men and women start families. Childbirth and parenting cause more significant delays in women's careers than in men's. The difficulties associated with the time periods of childbirth and parenting are connected with **a delay in research and a related delay in promotion; the difficulties of young women researchers to pursue post-doctoral studies and sabbaticals abroad** (which makes it very difficult for them to be hired as senior faculty members in universities and/or leads to being hired at lower ranks than men and later, delays in promotion); and reduced hours and time devoted to research and teaching in the early years of parenthood.

- 4) **Obstacles related to COVID-19 pandemic:** The coronavirus era and the prolonged lockdowns affected the writing and research outputs of all academic staff. As is the case in the country's economy and in continuation of what was stated in the previous paragraph, family burdens in many cases fell mainly on women who cut back their working hours to stay with their children. Academic staff members are no different in this sense from women in other sectors in Israel. The decline in productivity is particularly significant for women seeking tenure or promotion and may delay them at their current level for another period of time.

Solutions and initiatives to remove obstacles and promote equity: The Gender Equity Unit, together with the university administration, has examined the issues that arose during the bottom-up process and outlined a plan to address and remove the obstacles as part of the top-down process.

- 1) **Establishing the Gender Equity Unit:** At the University of Haifa, the title of the Advisor on Gender Equity was changed to the "**Advisor to the President on Gender Equity**", and that official now directly reports to the university president. Prof. Shulamit Almog, who has worked for the advancement of women and gender equality in and out of academia throughout her academic career, was recently appointed to the position. Recently, the **Gender Equity Unit** was established. As part of the unit, academic and administrative staff are striving, in both research and management-related areas, to formulate a new and in-depth approach to gender equity in academia and apply it to real-world situations. A steering committee was established for the unit, with representatives from each of the university faculties and the university administration. A preliminary dedicated website was set up for the unit, which continues to run a Facebook page that is updated constantly.
- 2) **Definition of three core principles for improving the quantitative and qualitative objectives** (which respond to the obstacles identified as part of the bottom-up process):
- a) *Hiring of female candidates who would have previously been hired as lecturers directly to the rank of senior lecturers:* Until now, women have been hired as lecturers at a higher rate than men. The reasons for this are varied. Sometimes the candidates were not strong enough to be promoted directly to the higher rank (for example, due to the lack of a postdoctoral fellowship abroad). In some instances, candidates encountered obstacles during their negotiations upon being hired to the institution. And sometimes the reasons are not clear. In any case, there is a reasonable suspicion that gender inequality exists in many cases. The Rector's current policy aspires to a situation in which senior lecturer will be the starting rank to which new members of the academic staff will be hired. Naturally such a move would accelerate the advancement of women to the senior ranks.
 - b) *Affirmative action in hiring* - According to the new hiring policy that will be enacted, when a male and female candidate with similar portfolios are competing for the same position, preference will be given to the woman to improve the gender equity and hiring rates of women at the university.
 - c) *Changing the variety of components in the candidates' application portfolio* – A post-doc at an academic institution abroad has been and remains a key component in candidates'

applications, and it is often a required condition without which women candidates could not be hired to a staff position at the university. The significant weight assigned to post-doctoral fellowships represents a real obstacle to the hiring of women at the university, since many female candidates can't relocate temporarily overseas to participate in this type of training, primarily for personal reasons. Moving forward, the goal is to expand the range of criteria and components examined in both women and men's candidacy applications, and to reduce the weight assigned to post-doctoral fellowships abroad in cases that justify doing so. In other words, an overseas post-doc will no longer be a prerequisite for hiring. Expanding the range of criteria will enable the recruitment of outstanding women (and men) with diverse skills and achievements that until now have been deemed as having insufficient experience when examining their candidacy for an academic staff position.

3) Initiatives to create a gender- and family-supportive environment:

- a) *Strengthening policies for preventing sexual harassment*: The University of Haifa is currently preparing to expand and improve its program for the prevention of sexual harassment, including the drafting of new campus regulations, the creation of an external judicial body that will address complaints of sexual harassment, and more.
- b) *Proactive promotion program*: Because women faculty members sometimes refrain from applying for promotion, the Gender Equity Unit will outline a "proactive promotion program" in which the faculties and departments will identify those female researchers who are ready for promotion and suggest to them to begin a promotion process, even if the researchers had not made an initial enquiry.
- c) *Establishing and operating an early childhood framework for children of female researchers and academic staff members*: In the next few years, we will assess the possibility of establishing educational frameworks within the university, as exist at other institutions, to reduce the negative impact on women staff members and maximize their available hours for teaching and research.
- d) *Workshops and training on gender equity*: The Gender Equity Unit organizes and conducts various workshops designed to cultivate awareness of equality and equity issues among members of the academic staff and the university administration. In the coming year, workshops are expected to be held for the administration and newly hired women faculty members. At present, a leadership workshop for female researchers from the STEM fields who have yet to achieve tenure is about to begin.
- e) *Changing the linguistic landscape on campus*: The Gender Equity Unit is leading a campaign to reduce the gender-related encumbrances of the Hebrew language being used. To this end, an effort will be made to change the wording of forms, websites, regulations, and other documents and texts published by the university and convert them to language worded as equally as possible.
- f) *Scheduling gender-appropriate work hours*: The COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to a digital work and teaching environment led to a significant and unreasonable expansion of work hours, and to demands from faculty members to be available during the late afternoon and evening hours as well. Meetings held during these hours are very difficult and sometimes impossible for staff members with children. Together with the return to active campus life, the Gender Equity Unit is emphasizing a return to

organizational practices that existed before the COVID-19 lockdowns and Zoom meetings. Such practices also exist at other academic institutions, according to which mandatory formal activities and work meetings take place between the hours of 10: 00-15: 30.

- 4) **Creating a scholarship program for women for post-doctoral studies abroad or in a combined Israel-overseas program:** In 2020-2021, the new scholarship program developed by the Gender Equity Unit was presented for the first time. The program is designed to help women who are interested in developing a significant academic career. Being awarded a scholarship will help the winners join the senior academic staff at the University of Haifa, and in general. As part of the program, two \$20,000 scholarships will be offered annually to fund students in post-doctoral fellowships abroad or in a combined Israel-overseas program. The combined programs were identified by the PBC / CHE as an important solution for the difficulties faced by many women when relocating for an extended period overseas.
- 5) **Dedicated program for addressing the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic:** The University of Haifa is preparing to confront the relevant difficulties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, a joint action plan was presented by the Rector of the university, the Vice President and Dean of Research, and the Dean of the Graduate Studies Authority. As part of the plan, several accommodations will be made available for academic staff, including: (1) Encouraging the submission of extension requests for those faculty members whose candidacy for promotion/tenure is not ready following a decrease in productivity during the pandemic; (2) Extending the eased teaching requirements period for new academic staff members by an additional year; and (3) Extending the research period in thesis and doctoral programs, based on the research supervisor's recommendation, for another semester (this is a flexible policy regarding extensions and personally customized solutions).
- 6) **Establishing a support network and mentoring programs:** The Gender Equity Unit will strive to establish social networking programs to help young women faculty members at the university get acquainted with people and provide them with mutual assistance. The program will verify that new female researchers hired by the university are being assisted, supervised, and mentored by the department or faculty with which they are associated.