
11th HGSFP Winter School

Obergurgl 2018

Final Report

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General Summary

This document concludes the 11th HGSFP Winter School that took place at the University Center in Obergurgl from 26th to 30th of January 2018. In total 48 graduate students from Heidelberg and 10 lecturers participated in the five-day event. The aim of the Winter School was to give students the opportunity to get insights into other research fields in Heidelberg apart from their own field. In the course of this, one of the focal points was the scientific exchange between the students themselves and students and lecturers in a friendly atmosphere. To this end, we organized a scientific programme consisting of 10 lectures given by speakers from Heidelberg and other universities and two poster sessions with elevator talks (see Appendix A).

The general interest in the school was very high such that we had to select the 42 participants from 73 applications in total. Fortunately none of our speakers had to cancel and in addition we were able to replace all students that had to cancel on short notice by other applicants. Consequentially, all the reserved 58 beds in Obergurgl were filled.

Participant Selection

As expected, we received more applications for the school than spots were available. We therefore had to select participants from the pool of applicants, which we wanted to perform as fair as possible. We felt it was important to be both transparent about and accountable for our selection. For this reason, we imposed a selection algorithm, laid open the complete procedure (with anonymized data)¹, and explain what decisions went into the selection. In the following, we give an overview on how we selected the participants for the HGSFP winter school 2019.

Asking The Right Questions

Designing the application form was perhaps the most difficult task, and it is at this stage that conference organizers will already want to put serious thought into the goals of the workshop and the ideal mix of participants to achieve those goals. It should be obvious, but you will only be able to include categories in your selection that you actually ask for.

Pre-selection

Excluding speakers, we have 52 spots for the meeting. Our participant selection proceeded in two parts. In the first part, we rejected candidates outright who were either (1) duplicate entries or (2) candidates who had informed us that they would not be able to come. Two spots were reserved for the HGSFP representatives. Finally, we pre-selected the organizing committee, who needs to be present at the school. Thus, a total of 8 participants (6

¹<https://github.com/matiscke/HGSFPschoolParticipantSelection>

organizers, 2 representatives) were pre-selected. We then anonymized our applicant pool by replacing names and other identifying information with a unique identifier.

Participant Selection

For the remaining $52 - 8 = 44$ slots, we used the software entropy to optimize our participant set based on a set of well-defined criteria on which the organizers agreed. It's worth noting here that this discussion took place before performing the selection, which then depended entirely on the goals for the selection and was independent of the input data set.

Target Distributions

The targets define the fraction of participants in the final output set who share the same value of a property (e.g. 25% of participants should be affiliated with the HGSFP branch "Fundamental Interactions and Cosmology"). The target fractions must sum up to be smaller or equal to 1.0 for each category. If the target fractions sum to a value smaller than one, the algorithm will try to fill up categories to at least the given fractions, and will ignore that category for the rest of the optimization procedure. The resulting mix of participants in the final set for this category will thus be a combination of the input fractions and the distribution in the input sample, conditioned on the constraints set by the remaining categories. Below, we will go through each category one by one and lay out our reasoning for the categories chosen. The justification for our choices is an abbreviated version of a longer discussion the organizing committee had before starting the selection procedure. We should note at this point that there is no "correct" way to choose target fractions; the target fractions must necessarily always be a function of the objectives and goals of the workshop, as defined by the organizers.

Selection Goals

Broadly, the goals we defined for the HGSFP Winter School 2019 for participant selection are the following:

- enable every HGSFP student to attend one winter school during their PhD:
 - ⇒ strongly favor applicants that have not attended a HGSFP winter school before
 - ⇒ favor applicants that are longer into their PhD (since the clock is ticking...)
- Reflect the student numbers of the different HGSFP branches
- Increase the participation of underrepresented minorities (in our case this translates to an effort for gender equality)

HGSFP branch

For the branch attribute, we aim to reflect the distribution of the overall branch affiliation

Previous Winter School Attendance

Derived from our top requirement, the acceptance of applicants with previous attendance of a winter school should be an exception. We decided if we allow previous attendees at all based on the oversubscription of the school. The latter was not very high, we therefore decided to accept applicants with previous attendance only via the waiting list. We enforce this criterion further below and do not solve for this parameter.

Gender Identity

Any social engineering involving gender is necessarily subject to scrutiny. Our choices here reflect our beliefs about what we would like the Winter School to be: We recognize that underrepresented minorities are particularly underrepresented in physics, which is reflected in the number of non-male PhD students. We also recognize studies that show that diverse groups outperform groups lacking diversity among several axes. Representation is important: we believe that minority participants might feel more comfortable participating if they do not feel singled out based on their gender.

Realizing that an equal representation of genders cannot be realized given the input set, we choose to set a goal fraction of female participants slightly higher than the corresponding share in the HGSFP and allow a sufficient margin for the option "Don't identify with either".

PhD Duration

We aimed to give senior PhD students that have not participated in a Winter School before an advantage in the selection, since they have less or no opportunities to re-apply next year.

Aside from the organizers and representatives, the entire procedure was performed entirely without names and based only on the candidates' responses and the complex optimization of the participant selection with respect to our goals. After the selection, all applicants were informed about the outcome and applicants in the 'accepted' list were asked to confirm their attendance within a specified period. Not all participants accepted our invitation on the first round. Free spots were filled with applicants from the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis with regard to our notification emails.

More detailed information about our selection procedure and an interactive Jupyter notebook that includes the original code can be found on

<https://github.com/matiscke/HGSFPschoolParticipantSelection>.

Lectures

The lecture topics covered the six largest branches of the HGSFP and were arranged in sessions of three parallel lectures each. In this way the students had the possibility to choose the three topics they were most interested in, while leaving enough free time for social activities and exchange. The great majority of students preferred this format over a tighter schedule with less parallel sessions (see Appendix B1). When organizing the lectures, our main consideration was to choose speakers that are known to give good introductory courses. We tried to keep the lectures rather informal such that students felt animated to ask questions and discussion developed during the sessions. The response of the students to this style of lectures was very good and they appreciated the broad range of topics ranging from String theory to Glacier physics (see Appendix B2).

Poster Sessions

The participants had the chance to present their own work in poster sessions that took place on two of the evenings. We decided to keep the short elevator talk sessions, that had first been introduced in the winter school 2017, in place. In this short round of talks each student got the chance to introduce his poster in a one minute pitch talk. Again, the general feedback to these elevator talks was very good. Following the tradition of the winter school, all students and lecturer had the chance to elect the winner of the winter school poster prize by anonymous vote. The name of the winner will be engraved into the *HGSFP Wanderpokal*.

Venue

The conference took place at the University Center in Obergurgl. The great advantage of this venue is that it offers a lot of space with several lecture rooms while being in direct proximity to a ski resort. This goes hand in hand with the spirit of the winter school of combining a rich lecture programme with enough time for social activities as skiing or hiking. The local staff was very helpful and contributed to everything running smoothly during our stay. The venue got an excellent rating by all participants and both the very good food and very clean rooms were highly appreciated. Even though the University Center significantly increased its prices over the years, we believe that it is still completely out of competition for what it offers.

Travel

After the evaluation of the winter school 2017, we had decided to travel by bus over night again. Even though travelling over night is certainly quite exhausting, the great majority of students had preferred this option over losing the additional time by travelling during the day. This years survey shows a very similar outcome.

Social Event

Following the tradition, the first evening of the Winter School was devoted to the social event — Eisstockschiessen. The participants appreciated this chance to get to know each other very much and, to our delight, most of the speakers joined as well. As our survey shows, some of the students did even wish for an additional organized social event on the last evening.

Final Remarks

Summarized, we think that this years Winter School was a great success. The feedback of students and lectures was very good and we believe that the goals of the school could be achieved. Everything went exactly as planned and the five days passed without any problems arising. We are very thankful for the great organizational and financial support of the HGSEF for this event and we hope that the tradition of the Winter School will be carried on in the future.

A Schedule of the HGSFP Winterschool 2018

B Evaluation

Time	Wednesday 16.01.	Thursday 17.01.	Friday 18.01.	Saturday 19.01.	Sunday 20.01.
07:30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
08:30 - 10:15	Arrival in Obergurgl ∞	Strongly Coupled Systems and the Applied Physics of Black Holes C. Ewerz	Building Planets - A Journey along 40 Orders of Magnitude T. Birnstiel	Strongly Coupled Systems and the Applied Physics of Black Holes C. Ewerz	Radiation Biology: Physics at the Forefront of Cancer Therapy J. Seco
		High-Precision Tests of Quantum Electrodynamics - The g-Factor F. Köhler-Langes	Unlocking Changes in Ocean Dynamics F. Hemsing	High-Precision Tests of Quantum Electrodynamics - The g-Factor F. Köhler-Langes	Prospects and Challenges of Quantum Computing M. Gärttner
		Josephson Junction Based Superconducting Electronics S. Kempf	Hot QCD Matter Produced in Ultra-Relativistic Heavy-Ion Collisions S. Masciocchi	Josephson Junction Based Superconducting Electronics S. Kempf	Galaxy Formation and Cosmology T. Buck
10:30 - 15:30		Break	Break	Break	Break
17:00 - 18:45	Dinner at 18:00 Social Event	Building Planets - A Journey along 40 Orders of Magnitude T. Birnstiel	From Snow to Avalanches – A Journey through Scales and Phase Transitions A. Capelli	Radiation Biology: Physics at the Forefront of Cancer Therapy J. Seco	Departure
		Unlocking Changes in Ocean Dynamics F. Hemsing		Prospects and Challenges of Quantum Computing M. Gärttner	
		Hot QCD Matter Produced in Ultra-Relativistic Heavy-Ion Collisions S. Masciocchi		Galaxy Formation and Cosmology T. Buck	
19:00		Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
20:00 - open End		Elevator Talks Poster Session	Elevator Talks Poster Session	Introduction to the HGSEFP	