



The 13<sup>th</sup> convocation of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Mohali held on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024. In all 168 BS-MS, 4 MS, 9 BS and 110 PhD degrees were awarded in areas as diverse as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Earth and Environmental Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences. Five out of 110 PhD graduates were enrolled in the Integrated PhD program of the Institute and received their MS degree along with a PhD. The total number of students graduating in this convocation is 291.

The Chief Guest on this occasion was Professor Ashutosh Sharma, a pioneer in nanotechnology, who is currently the President of the Indian National Science Academy, and former Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Science and Technology. Professor Sharma also holds Institute Chair Professorship at IIT Kanpur.

The convocation function was presided over by Dr. J. S. Yadav, Chairperson, Board of Governors of the Institute, the former Director of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad.

Mr. James Watt, a Physics major, received the President's Gold Medal for the best academic performance among BS-MS students. Ms. Prajakta Tanaji Mane, also a Physics major with a minor in Astrophysics, was awarded the Professor SN Kaul Medal for best all-round performance. Minor degree is an innovative concept of the course curriculum of IISER Mohali, where students taking elective courses from carefully crafted baskets of courses are allowed to claim a minor in domains such as Data Science, Science Education, Science and Society Studies, Development and Public Policy Studies, Astronomy, Earth Sciences, Atmospheric Sciences, Indian History, and various branches of Science and Mathematics. This year 26 students received a minor degree in Data Science, 14 students received a minor degree in Science Education and 51 students received a minor degree in various other branches.

Ms. Akanksha Singh in Biology, Mr. Rishab Panda in Chemistry, Ms. Rupkatha Chand in Mathematics, and Mr. James Watt in Physics received Academic Excellence Prizes for best performance in their respective disciplines.

Thanks to the diverse academic training of IISER Mohali, apart from core Science subjects, the students do courses in domains as diverse as Humanities, Visual Arts, Science Education and Data Sciences. The interdisciplinary research lies in the genesis of IISERs, which were established during 2006-2016 across seven locations in the country. The IISER Mohali started functioning from Sector-26, Chandigarh in 2007 and is now located in Sector-81 on the airport road. It was the first institute that came up in the Knowledge City of Mohali.

In the Director's report, Professor Anil K. Tripathi, the Director of the Institute welcomed all the guests and highlighted the achievements of the Institute in the last one year. Addressing the students, he said, "Today is a day of joy and pride, not only for graduating students, but also for parents, guardians, and loved ones, as well as for teachers who shared their knowledge, experience and affection, to prepare students to become worthy bearers of the flag of IISER Mohali".

Professor Ashutosh Sharma, the Chief Guest, in his address to the students emphasized the role of translational research and entrepreneurship. He said "IISERs can be perfect examples of technological growth through basic sciences. For example, green hydrogen production by water splitting, the use of AI in scientific research, sustainability solutions, etc. What is needed is to cultivate the highest quality, profoundness and leadership in basic research; and to inject relevance, direction and connect to the outside in applied research".

IISER Mohali, currently ranked 51 in the overall category of NIRF rankings, is an Institute of National Importance established through an act of parliament, in order to impart quality science education and inculcate the spirit of research through innovative teaching and research methodologies. Over the last 17 years it has emerged as a preferred destination for academically gifted students from across the country. It

admits students for integrated masters, integrated PhD and doctoral programs. IISER Mohali graduates are placed in some of the top research institutions around the world such as Oxford, MIT, Cornell, Stanford, Caltech, TIFR, NCBS, JNCASR and IISc. Students have received highly prestigious fellowships and grants such as Fulbright-Nehru fellowships, Leaky foundation grants, Max-Planck fellowships and Alexander von Humboldt fellowship to name a few.

### About the academic excellence prize / medal winners

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**Akanksha Singh (Biology).** She hails from Bokaro, a city in Jharkhand. Her interest in research was sparked by the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) scheme, which eventually led her to join IISER Mohali. At IISER Mohali, she majored in Biology while also taking courses in interdisciplinary sciences, reflecting her interest in the theoretical aspects of Biology. She plans to continue her academic journey and has received a PhD offer from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön, Germany, which she will be pursuing next.

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**Rishab Panda (Chemistry).** He graduates with a major in Chemistry and a minor in Biology. He will be pursuing a PhD in Chemistry at the University of Rochester, New York, USA. He greatly enjoyed her time at IISER Mohali, where he had the opportunity to be a part of both the Student Representative Council and the Opportunity Cell. He completed his MS thesis at ENS de Lyon, France, through the IISER-ENS internship program. MS Thesis is the final year research project that can be pursued by the students either within the Institute or anywhere else, under the guidance of a local mentor.

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**Rupkatha Chand (Mathematics).** She spent her school days in West Bengal and decided to stay in academia. Her teachers had instilled in her a desire to pursue Physics. However, after coming to IISER, she got a chance to explore the subjects in greater detail, and later chose to major in Mathematics. Having explored the domain of Pure Mathematics through her coursework at IISER Mohali, she is looking forward to delve into the applications of mathematics in the future. Currently, she wishes to pursue Masters in areas related to Statistics, Probability, and Data Science.

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**James Watt (President's Gold Medal, and Physics).** He has thoroughly enjoyed his tenure at IISER Mohali, majoring in Physics with a Master's thesis focused on early universe cosmology, complemented by a minor in Astronomy & Astrophysics. His next academic pursuit is a PhD in astrophysics at the Australian National University, where he will specialize in magnetohydrodynamics and turbulence to study star and galaxy formation across different cosmic epochs. He says, "Under the stewardship of our Director, IISER Mohali encourages students to return to India and contribute to Indian science and I aim to be a part of it. I aspire to use the skills and knowledge that

I learn abroad to contribute to science in India as a future researcher and aid India's rise as a global leader in world science."

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**Prajakta Tanaji Mane (SN Kaul Medal).** She exemplifies outstanding all-around performance. She grew up in a small town in Maharashtra looking up to her parents who are physics professors. Walking the same path, she graduates from IISER Mohali with a Physics major. She completed her MS Thesis in astrophysics, along with a minor in astronomy. She plans to continue in academics and pursue a PhD in astronomy. She has been a co-founder of WiPMA, an initiative for Women in Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy. She has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering inclusivity within the scientific community.

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