

MIT pulls online lectures over harassment claim

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The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has removed a retired physics professor's lectures from an online learning platform because the school concluded he had sexually harassed a woman, university officials said.

MIT said in a statement Monday that it began investigating after a woman filed a complaint in October saying that Walter Lewin had sexually harassed her online. MIT said the woman provided information about Lewin's interactions with her and his interactions with other female online learners.

Lewin could not immediately be reached for comment Tuesday. A message was left at a phone number listed for Lewin in Cambridge.

Lewin, 78, taught at MIT for more than three decades and his popular physics lectures drew wide acclaim. He retired in July 2009 and last taught an online course in 2013. He was not teaching any courses, either on campus or online, when MIT received the complaint.

"Dr. Lewin had a long and distinguished career at MIT, and it is painful to learn of the behavior that necessitated this action," MIT Provost Martin Schmidt said.

"Complaints of harassment must be met immediately and squarely in all cases," Schmidt said.

Lewin was known for his unconventional lectures, including one in

which he showed that a pendulum's period remains constant regardless of mass by swinging from a pendulum himself.

MIT said its investigation determined that Lewin's behavior toward the woman violated its sexual harassment policy.

"We must take the greatest care that everyone who comes to us for knowledge and instruction, whether in classrooms or online, can count on MIT as a safe and respectful place to learn," MIT President L. Rafael Reif said.

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