Quantum algorithmic breakeven: on scaling up with noisy qubits

Daniel A. Lidar[1,2,3,4]

[1] Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089, USA

[2] Center for Quantum Information Science Technology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089, USA

[3] Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089, USA

[4] Department of Chemistry, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089, USA

As quantum computing proceeds from perfecting physical qubits towards testing logical qubits and small scale algorithms, an urgent question being confronted is how to decide that critical milestones and thresholds have been reached. Typical criteria are gates exceeding the accuracy threshold for fault tolerance, logical qubits with higher coherence than the constituent physical qubits, and logical gates with higher fidelity than the constituent physical gates. In this talk I will argue in favor of a different criterion I call "quantum algorithmic breakeven", which focuses on demonstrating an algorithmic scaling improvement in an error-corrected setting over the uncorrected setting. I will present evidence that current experiments with commercial quantum annealers have already crossed this threshold. I will also discuss our latest evidence for a limited quantum speedup with such devices. The lessons we have learned from experimenting with commercial devices with many noisy qubits will hopefully inform other approaches to quantum computing.