The principal goal of Infotech Oulu is to create an environment for the development of world-class research groups by promoting long-term research, researcher training, and international cooperation. An independent international panel evaluates the research groups that apply for membership of Infotech Oulu, using criteria similar to those used by the Academy of Finland. With such regular external evaluation and with our internal quality control – continuously developing them – we can help our research groups succeed and give them the valuable Infotech label.

Nine research groups were selected to our new four-year period starting in 2014. In the previous four-year period, we had five groups as full members and three groups as associate members. Currently, all the groups have equal status, but only the six best according to our last evaluation results are receiving direct funding from Infotech Oulu.

Our research is held in high esteem by external funders. The total external annual research funding was about EUR 16.5 million. Direct comparison to the previous year cannot be done, because the research groups are not the same than a year ago and funding for doctoral student positions were now decided internally by the University of Oulu. Taking these facts into account the total external funding decreased about 8%, but funding from the Academy of Finland – that we value most – increased about 14%. We have been pleased to notice that funding from the Academy of Finland has increased year after year, and is currently about 27% of our total external funding. Our most significant funding source is Tekes (the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation) with its 46% portion. Direct annual support in 2014 from the University to Infotech Oulu was EUR 400 000 and to Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program EUR 1.0 Million in form of doctoral student positions, and additional EUR 100 000 for operational costs and coordination.

One of the principal goals of Infotech Oulu is to promote international collaboration. Both bilateral cooperation between research groups, and participation in EU and other international research programs are important. Also the value the Wireless Innovation between Finland and U.S. (WiFiUS) platform for building long-term research and education collaboration in the field of wireless networking has been recognized. We have promoted international activities by providing financial support for organizing workshops, and arranging courses and lectures given by visiting experts. The main funding for these activities comes from our doctoral program. By the end of 2014, about 35% of our whole staff was from abroad. With the doctoral students the number is slightly higher. Based on these figures, our research is more international than ever. Direct strategic funding from the University of Oulu helps us in achieving our goals; one tenure track position in the Center for Machine Vision Research (CMV) and one in the Biomedical Engineering Research Group (BME) started at the beginning of 2014. In addition, a record number of four Academy Research Fellow posts were granted to Infotech Oulu research groups in 2014.

One milestone in achieving the highest level in research is the Finnish Centres of Excellence (CoE) research program by the Academy of Finland. Academy Professor Juha Kostamovaara’s group, as a part of a joint unit Centre of Excellence in Laser Scanning Research, won CoE status for the years 2014–2019. An international The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2013) was performed for research communities of the University of Oulu in order to classify their scientific quality and the results were received in the beginning of 2014. Two Infotech groups, CMV, and BME as a part of a larger unit, both belonged to a very small number of research groups that reached the highest possible score in the most competitive category.

The University of Oulu has been experiencing organizational changes, including the formation of a new faculty in our research area; the Faculty of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering started its operations at the beginning of 2014. Other major changes have been in doctoral education. The University of Oulu Graduate School (UniOGS) has taken the control of doctoral studies in our university. Infotech Oulu Doctoral program, as one of its programs has now the responsibility in the doctoral studies in our research area. The former director of our doctoral program, Professor Markku Juntti started as the Dean of UniOGS from the beginning of 2014. He was replaced by Professor Timo Rahkonen.

The number of doctoral dissertations within Infotech has grown during the past few years. In 2014, the output was 21 dissertations from the research groups of Infotech Oulu. Small part of these dissertations came from other doctoral program than ours. The total number of dissertations from the Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program was 34. In addition to the nine groups of Infotech Oulu, additional seven groups belong to the Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program.
The doctoral student positions are extremely important to Infotech Oulu, because this funding supports most efficiently the current and future long term research that we value most. The Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program received 20 four-year and 14 two-year doctoral student positions from the University of Oulu, starting from the beginning of 2014. From these 34 positions, 25 were allocated only for research groups selected into Infotech Oulu for 2014–2017. During 2014 there were another application by the university; doctoral student positions for years 2016–2019. We got 12 four-year positions with glowing comments. According to the feedback from the evaluators Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program is strategically significant, excellent program; large, well organized and internationally competitive research community that has notable external funding, remarkable impact on society, excellent co-operation (i.a. VTT), origin for new startups, very good supervision arrangements, numerically good results in doctoral training, good employment rate for doctors, especially to enterprises and abroad, great number of foreign doctoral students, excellent operatives (Academy Professor, several FidiPro-vacancies, ERC-researchers, involvement in a group with Centres of Excellence status by the Academy of Finland, good results by the research groups in Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2013).

Large organizational changes in the University of Oulu continue. We have quite new University of Oulu Graduate School, new Faculty of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, and now our university also has the new Rector with a new vision.