

FOREWORD

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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, we can help our research groups succeed and give them the valuable Infotech label.

Nine research groups were selected to our current 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 received direct funding from Infotech Oulu in during the first half of this four-year period.

Our research is held in high esteem by external funders. The total external annual research funding remained about the same as in the previous year well over EUR 15 million. Funding from the Academy of Finland – that we value most – is over a quarter of it. Less than half of our funding comes from Tekes (the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation).

Direct annual support in 2015 from the University to Infotech Oulu was EUR 400 000. Most of it was given to the research groups. In addition, Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program received EUR 1.258 Million in form of doctoral student positions, and EUR 100 000 for operational costs and coordination. In 2016, the financial support to research groups is completely pre-defined. It is only for doctoral student and post-doctoral researcher positions.

One milestone in achieving the highest level in research is the Finnish Centres of Excellence (CoE) research program by the Academy of Finland. In the current call for years 2018–2025, several Infotech Oulu research groups are involved. Academy Professor Juha Kostamovaara's group, as a part of a joint unit Centre of Excellence in Laser Scanning Research, showed the way by winning the CoE status for the years 2014–2019.

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 im-

portant. 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 came from our doctoral program. 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.

The number of doctoral dissertations within Infotech has grown during the past few years. In 2015, the output was 26 dissertations from the research groups of Infotech Oulu. Some of these dissertations came from other doctoral program than ours. The total number of dissertations from the Infotech Oulu Doctoral Program was 34. The latter figure includes also those dissertations where the doctoral student did not work in the group. 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. In addition to the 20 positions for years 2014–2017, we were granted 12 four-year positions for 2016–2019 in 2015 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.e. 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)*. In addition to doctoral student positions funded by the University of Oulu, many of our research groups are involved in I4Future Doctoral Programme that received EU funding for 20 doctoral student positions for four years starting in 2017.

Large organizational changes in the University of Oulu continue. Now we have new Faculty of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering and quite new University of Oulu Graduate School that will still make substantial changes to our doctoral education. There

certainly will be more changes in the focus area organizations, like Infotech Oulu. In any case, it is important to find the most efficient way to support our world-class top research in the University of Oulu.