

Bulletin

Research evaluation: Department of Information Studies

University of Tampere has performed on the basis of its own initiative an evaluation of the quality of academic research. The focus of the evaluation was on the output, that is, on the results of research activity of departments in years 1999-2003. The main domains of interest were publications, large research projects (predicting future publications), and doctorates. The evaluation was conducted by panels consisting of national and international specialists in the given research area.

Evaluation grades were given both verbally and numerically. The dimensions of evaluation were (I) the level of research with regard to the international level of research in the field, and (II) the contextual and practical importance and quality of research. The numeric grades were given on a scale 1-7.

Department of Information Studies was one of the seven best-graded units out of 28 units evaluated at the University. The panel states that the Department has a mature research culture and high-quality research practice is a built-in component of the departmental activity. There is good nurturing of doctoral and masters students and sustainability of the department has clearly been considered, witness for example the number of 'junior' research staff in key areas.

The department has taken a strategic decision to focus its research on areas where it has established a track record. Information Retrieval in the department is concerned with the structure of queries and of documents and the matching of these. ISIC is concerned with the structure of activities or the contexts that produce a number of behaviours that include IR. The department demonstrates international excellence in the area of Information Retrieval, and strong international presence in the area of Information Seeking. There is a well-established research culture within the department that has been developed over two decades or so, and evidence of the cumulation of research that should emerge from a strong group. Senior members of the department also have other indicators of their professional standing through, for example, membership of editorial boards, chairing program committees of the most important conferences (SIGIR), memberships of program committees, an Academy Professorship award, eminent visiting Professors and foreign researchers in the areas of information retrieval and information seeking. The output of graduated doctors, 14 over 5 years, is very good for a department of that size.

The department has been established for a long time, has a tradition of excellence and is very highly regarded internationally as an excellent research-oriented department. It operates in a number of carefully chosen niche areas, produces a considerable amount of high quality publication and a good number of doctoral graduates. The panel recommends that the department be supported to continue to do its excellent work.

Grade I: 6, Grade II: 5.

APPENDIX

Panel 1

Panelists

Chair	Professor Olli Martio, University of Helsinki, Finland
Panel members	Professor Maristella Agosti, University of Padua, Italy
	Professor Elisabeth Davenport, Napier University, UK
	Professor Timo Koski, University of Linköping, Sweden
	Professor Raine Koskimaa, University of Jyväskylä, Finland
	Professor Thomas Ottmann, University of Freiburg, Germany
	Professor Alan Smeaton, Dublin City University, Ireland

Departments / subjects under evaluation:

The Hypermedia Laboratory

Department of Information Studies

Mathematics (Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy)

Statistics (Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy)

Department of Computer Science

Dimensions, grades and criteria (summary)

Grades represent two different and independent dimensions (see below) of the quality of research. No average or parameter numbers will be considered. Evaluation panels will supplement and motivate their grades in written statements. The panels are requested to use the general criteria by carefully considering their applicability to the special characteristics and situations of each department and discipline.

Dimension I

The level of research with regard to the international level of research in the field

The grade on this dimension describes departmental research achievement relative to the international level in the field, that is, (potential or existent) academic value in the international context. For this grade, evaluators are asked to make an assessment of the submitted work with regard to the international level, considering whether it either has been or could be published in the best journals or books in the field, regardless of where or in which language it actually was published.

Dimension II

The contextual and practical importance and quality of research

The University of Tampere is a multidisciplinary university with a wide range of disciplinary areas. The purpose of research and practices of research as well as publishing vary from one department to another, with the emphasis of research varying from the strictly academic to the more practical. Dimension II describes the contextual and practical importance of the research. It may or may not fall together with academic quality in the strict sense referred to in Dimension I. For grade II, evaluators are asked to assess the practical importance, relevance and usefulness of the research to society and community, and the field of practices the department is working in.

The grades are given to a department on a scale 1-7.