Position of the Executive Board of Eindhoven University of Technology regarding the assessment of the sub-department Computer Science

The computer science research over the period 2009-2014 of all universities in the Netherlands with a (sub-)department Computer Science was assessed in 2015. The assessment committee consisted of chairperson Gerard van Oortmerssen, secretary Annemarie Venemans and six peers from abroad: Christel Baier, Mary Czerwinski, Xiaohui Liu, Bashar Nuseibeh, Lothar Thiele and Wolfgang Wahlster. The assessment was carried out using the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 for the research assessment of universities in the Netherlands. The findings of the assessment committee have been published in the report Research Evaluation Mathematics 2009-2014 (https://www.tue.nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksbeoordelingen).

The Executive Board of Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) has accepted the report and wishes to thank the assessment committee for the considerable time and effort it has spent on this assessment. The Executive Board highly appreciates the recognition of the merits of research within TU/e’s sub-department Computer Science (CS) and also the recommendations made to further improve it.

We list the most important findings and recommendations of the committee:

- A number of research areas in TU/e’s CS are of very good quality both in terms of international markers and visibility and impact.
- There was a significant reduction in the number of publications during the research period under review, yet the quality of many publications remains very high.
- The committee is concerned about the competition between teaching and research, which appeared to have a negative impact on productivity and research quality.
- The success rate of the PhD program could be improved. There is also room to further increase the number of PhD students. The committee was pleased to see though that the increased teaching load of the staff has not been passed on to or shared with the PhD students.
- The overall research picture would have benefitted from more clarity in both research strategy and reporting of existing research efforts and achievements.
- TU/e’s CS appears to be in the midst of significant and ongoing changes. The increase in student numbers, the subsequent changes in teaching loads and the start of various new educational programs (Bachelor College, Graduate School, Data Science) appear to have had an observable impact on the volume, and perhaps consistency of quality, of research at TU/e’s CS. Projections of further increases in student numbers and teaching loads suggest that these are difficulties that may not disappear very soon.
- The vision, mission and objectives presented to the review committee lacked in scientific, discipline-specific direction. A clear vision for TU/e’s CS, with an effective recruitment strategy, is necessary.
The Executive Boards of TU/e and its Department of M&CS have discussed the recommendations of the research assessment, and will continue to discuss these the coming months. A plan is currently being developed to remedy shortcomings noticed by the committee. Some actions, such as the strategic appointment of extra staff, were already undertaken shortly after the research interviews. More actions have followed meanwhile and will still follow.