

Yaskawa Orders Study from Lappeenranta University of Technology



Liisa-Maija Sainio, Provost at Lappeenranta University of Technology, and Panu Kurronen, CTO, Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch, sign an agreement to collaborate on an extensive study to develop next generation technology for power electronics

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Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch and Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT) have agreed to collaborate on an extensive study in which LUT will help develop next generation technology for power electronics. The research will take an estimated 1.5 years to complete and is the highest-value study the university has ever conducted for a single company.

Since 2014, Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch has been a part of Yaskawa Electric Corporation, headquartered in Kitakyushu, Japan. Yaskawa Electric is one of the world's leading product manufacturers of drive technology, factory automation and robotics.

The Switch products make up a substantial proportion of Yaskawa's portfolio in power generation technology. The technology is used in the key components for wind turbines, for instance. The Switch product categories also include generators for marine applications and turbo electric motors for industrial applications.

"This agreement significantly increases Yaskawa's investments in R&D in Finland. LUT has had a long history in cooperating with Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch, but this is the first research project that is being financed directly from the headquarters in Japan," says Panu Kurronen, CTO, Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch.

The focus of this research is on power electronics, which will benefit all the product categories of Yaskawa Environmental Energy / The Switch. Business Finland, formerly Tekes, the Finnish funding agency for technology and innovation, is also helping to finance the research project. According to Kurronen, the project is a natural continuation of the long-standing cooperation between the company and the university, in which proximity, good relations and excellent results have enabled success.

The first commercially applicable results of the study are expected to be delivered by the beginning of 2020.

Leader of the project, Olli Pyrhönen, Professor of Electrical Engineering, LUT, states that the study will employ about 30 researchers. In addition to the new technology that is expected as a result of the cooperation, the partner company will reap benefits in its recruiting efforts.

"It has been one of our aims for the past 20 years to strengthen the area's electrical industry. In addition to developing technology, we have had an ongoing dialog with local companies on their needs for employee skills. Research projects familiarize researchers with company cultures, which in turn make it easier for these talents to shift from the academic world into an industrial work environment," explains Pyrhönen.

"Investments of significant corporate players like Yaskawa, as well as the research contribution of LUT, make up a solid base for taking advantage of technological breakthroughs. From my perspective, there's an exciting new hub of power electronics beginning to emerge in Lappeenranta," Pyrhönen continues.

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