Laser technology enters new era

Institute of Photonics

Established in 1995, the Institute of Photonics is a groundbreaking initiative designed to bridge the gap between University of Strathclyde research and industry, exploiting the University's expertise in the field of photonics research and development.

The Institute's portfolio of collaborative research and development projects includes strategic long-term research, industrial contracts, academic-industrial collaborative research programmes and consultancy.

The US Army Research Labs and Samsung are just two of the high profile industry and government partners which have sought the Institute's expertise in recent months.

Over the past year, the Institute has secured funding from the DTI to pursue research on its Intra-cavity Adaptive Optics project.

The team, headed by Dr David Burns, is exploring the active control of laser output in order to make lasers more practical. The initiative is in response to the demand from industry for next generation lasers, allowing the development of more flexible optical technology, thus prolonging the life of laser equipment and making them easier to maintain.

The 30-month project kicked off in April 2006 and is a collaboration between the Institute and industry heavyweights BAE Systems, Selex, Powerlase and Pro-Lite, with funding from the DTI.

Simon Andrews, Institute of Photonics Business Development Manager, said: "The Institute of Photonics was created intentionally to be industry-facing and we have built a significant reputation across a number of industry sectors.

"While we do work closely with our industry partners, often we will collaborate with academic partners in strategic research which we believe has significant commercial applications for the future.

"We will then seek out specific partners in order to fully exploit the potential of this far-sighted, strategic activity."

Among other projects, the Institute of Photonics has also recently been awarded funding from Scottish Enterprise's Proof of Concept scheme, which seeks to fast-track cutting-edge Scottish research from the laboratory to the marketplace.

Under this programme, the Institute is undertaking a joint project with the University of Strathclyde's Chemistry department to research novel UV transmissive polymers.