A progressive society
Cultivating a vibrant research culture in Malaysia.
Propagating research-driven academia

By TINA CARMILLIA

With the country’s goal of becoming a developed nation by 2020, one of its biggest challenges is the establishment of a scientifically advanced and progressive society. Such a society will not just be a consumer of technology but an innovative contributor to scientific and technological efforts.

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation realises that to propel the nation’s socio-economic landscape, it has to play an important role in strengthening the field of science, technology and innovation (STI) in all sectors through research and development as outlined in the National Policy on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (NPSTI). This research culture is slowly building within the young academic community in the country.

The entry point for most research work is through institutions of higher education, particularly at the postgraduate level. One of the goals of the postgraduate studies is to produce graduates who are capable of designing, conducting and analysing a piece of scientific study.

Fundamental and applied research drives economic development. Fundamental research focuses on discovering new theories, ideas or concepts while applied research solves practical problems and improves processes.

Doria Abdullah, academic fellow in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia’s School of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, explains: “Both types of research are equally important. For example, an understanding of the Nipah virus spreads and mutates is a fundamental research effort. With this knowledge, researchers are able to identify the right vaccines through applied research.”

“Another example would be how social studies were carried out to understand the function and operations of sekolah panduk; which is a form of fundamental research.

“Applied research improves the sustainability of this education system and provides suggestions on how best to help the schools move with current development trends such as using IT in teaching and learning.”

Vibrant research environment

The country’s higher education institutions are the most vibrant in the region as the mix of a multi-cultural community, climate and affordable living costs makes Malaysia an attractive destination for foreign students.

It is no surprise that Malaysia also hosts a good number of prestigious universities through their branch campuses, including Monash University Malaysia, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and Heriot-Watt University Malaysia.

In its 2011 survey, the Ministry of Higher Education, which has now been absorbed into the Ministry of Education, found that Malaysia was ranked 11th worldwide as a destination among international students.

Nonetheless, the research effort in academia faces its own challenges. Funding is one of the biggest constraints.

The government – through grants such as InnoFund for development or improvement of new or existing products, iFundo for new ideas and advancements of knowledge, and TechnoFund to stimulate growth or commercialisation – attempts to address this issue.

According to Scopus statistics, which is the world’s largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed research literature, Malaysian academics produced more than 14,000 research papers between 1996 and 2012.

This compares favourably to their Singaporean and Thai counterparts who produced 12,000 and 8,000 research publications, respectively, within the same period.

Encouraged by the improved performance of local academics in research and academic publications in international journals, the government announced earlier this year that it will continue to provide grants for public universities.

In the last two federal budgets, RM600mil was allocated as research grants for public institutions of higher learning.

Research universities lead the way

The government has also issued full autonomy to the five research universities in Malaysia – Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia – to respond to the government's call to respond to the government's call to respond to the government’s call to respond to the government’s call for talented researchers.

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The government has also issued full autonomy to the five research universities in Malaysia in order to allow greater flexibility for the universities to implement their own measures to improve the standings and prestige of the universities.

With autonomy over their academic, administrative and financial matters, the five research universities in Malaysia – Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia – are expected to be catalysts to make the country’s higher education industry innovative and competitive.

Additionally, the prestige of these research universities will not attract just its graduates to return for postgraduate education, but also students from abroad to return for postgraduate studies in the country.

While it is one of the country’s aspirations to be the regional hub of higher education, with the trend towards research studies, it will not be far-fetched to expect the research culture to flourish among students.

In fact, some academics are of the opinion that the emphasis given to the research culture should begin at the undergraduate level.

This opinion is shared by senior lecturer Dr Habibah Ahmad, who, with colleagues Hamzah Jusoh and Amriah Buang of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, published a study on the nurturing of research culture in Malaysia in 2011.

“It is timely that research universities take the role of educating students to become researchers at the undergraduate level. A reward system in an innovative learning environment must include elements of exposure to real situations and issues through fieldwork and network between university and community.”

She encourages the nurturing and development of research culture among university students even at the undergraduate level because it broadens the learning experience in higher learning institutions.

“More importantly, the New Economic Model demands a human capital workforce that provides both quality and quantity in the knowledge economy,” she adds.

“Research efforts might not be felt” by the society and it is understandable if people question the emphasis given to it. The truth is the outcome can be seen in the commercialisation of products and job creation. Research doesn’t just build the country; it also builds our higher education system and its international reputation,” says Doria.

Efforts to boost RSE

It is obvious that the government plays an active role in shaping the country’s research culture, including through initiatives like the NPSTI and MyBrain15 scholarship programme.

The MyBrain15 programme is one of the critical agenda projects under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan to create a pool of highly knowledgeable people as a catalyst for research, development and innovation to drive Malaysia into a high income nation.

The government anticipates a ratio of 72 research scientists and engineers (RSE) for every 10,000 people in the workforce by 2020. The current ratio is 58.2 for every 10,000 workers.

The government also aims to produce a ratio of 9.8 RSE for every 10,000 workers.

It is therefore a university’s role to respond to the government’s call and attract students into its postgraduate programmes as well as build relationships with the industry, particularly in the research and development sector.

When the nation’s research culture matures, it will contribute to economic growth through innovative product commercialisation besides attracting international students to the postgraduate research programmes offered in the institutions of higher learning and making the country the region's research hub.

Without the cooperation between the government, universities and industry, the only culture the research field can boast is the type found in petri dishes in dingy laboratories.
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Ready for the world stage

N early 2011, Universiti Utara Malaysia devised a strategic plan to consolidate our position and reputation as the leading university for management and business studies at the national level.

We are now moving towards the second phase (2016–2020) of our strategic plan, in which we intend to seize opportunities that may arise on the Asian and international stage.

One of the key markers used to guide us in this process is the global rankings criteria used by international ranking bodies.

Since the emergence of global rankings, there has been a heightened awareness among institutions of higher learning at both the national and international levels of the pursuit of prominence.

It is now imperative that universities measure their performance against ranking criteria.

The world university rankings are one of the primary sources of reference that influence prospective students and their parents on the choice of a study destination and the basis upon which the government determines funding allocations and develops higher education policies.

They affect university-industry partnerships, which are crucial to funding and shaping the even more direct and pragmatic contribution of academia to nation building.

Given the immense importance vested in world university rankings, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of ranking methodologies to improve our practices, consolidate our strengths and make substantial progress through the ranking system.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia recognises four world-ranking bodies: QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) and Webometrics Ranking of World Universities.

Currently, UUM is listed in the QS and Webometrics rankings. The results of the ranking exercise exemplify UUM’s promising progress in both rankings.

In the QS ranking among Malaysian universities, UUM’s position improved from 15th in 2012 to 9th last year. In the Asian universities, UUM’s position improved from the 224th rank last year, a higher rank compared to our 299th ranking, we attained the 224th rank last year. In the Asian universities, UUM’s position improved from the 224th rank last year, a higher rank compared to our 299th ranking, we attained the 224th rank last year.

In the ARWU, UUM is ranked 1,652nd out of 22,000 participating universities. UUM is ranked 1,652nd out of 22,000 participating universities. UUM is ranked 1,652nd out of 22,000 participating universities. UUM is ranked 1,652nd out of 22,000 participating universities.

We are also ranked 54th in the South-East Asia ranking, an encouraging jump from the 83rd position held last year. In Malaysia, we are ranked 8th, which is an improvement of four positions from that attained in July last year.

UUM has certainly taken huge strides in its progress since first joining the international ranking agenda barely a year ago.

However, we are aware that our efforts have to be doubled to realise our targeted position in the world rankings.

Towards this end, we are intensifying our focus on the current staples of academia, namely research and publication, teaching and learning, leadership, and innovation and commercialisation.

We aim to increase the quantity and quality of the research and publication activities undertaken by UUM academics. To encourage a rise in the number of UUM academics published in SCOPUS, ISI and other scholarly high impact publications, we have instituted a schedule of incentives to motivate authors.

In addition, we aim to fulfil the myriad of needs of our increasingly diverse population of staff and students by harnessing the properties of ICT in a campaign to place ourselves at the forefront of technological trends in education and enterprise.

We also plan to initiate a more comprehensive use of technology in education by way of e-learning powered by Web 2.0. We also intend to implement the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to promote the sharing of teaching-learning materials among academics.

To position UUM as the hub of excellence in the region, we have begun our drive to raise the capacity of our schools and institutes at UUM to become Centres of Excellence (CoE) that specialise in their own core competencies.

We believe that such focus on our strengths will help us grow in stature and attract more private investments, making us a formidable force and a serious global contender.

We have never lost sight of our primary product – our human capital. We have always prided ourselves on nurturing well-rounded students.

We will also continue to focus on and maximise our capability to promote ethics and noble, humanitarian values among our students in an effort to mould resilient future leaders.

Our aim to raise our world ranking position will never be done at the expense of our self-esteem or the principles underpinning the vision and mission of the university.

Our efforts towards hoisting the UUM flag in the arena of Asia’s Top 50 Universities go hand-in-hand with our efforts to transform ourselves into an internationally celebrated high performance Management University by 2020.

Prof Datuk Wira Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak is the vice-chancellor of Universiti Utara Malaysia.

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Aussie MBA offered locally

The University of Wollongong’s Sydney Business School (UOW-SBS), one of the best emerging Australian business schools, offers a Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme that meets the growing need for high-quality postgraduate programmes for working professionals.

The UOW-SBS MBA, which is available at INTI International College Kuala Lumpur, enables students and professionals to expand and advance in their respective areas of expertise, to build professional excellence and to enhance their leadership capabilities.

The programme comprises 11 core units and one elective unit. Each of the core units is designed to develop students’ core competencies such as strategic analysis, decision-making and appreciation of global business challenges, which are complemented by people, financial, marketing and system analysis skills.

An overarching theme of the programme is an emphasis on analytical thinking, innovation and creativity, which are areas critical for entrepreneurial and business success.

Included in the UOW-SBS MBA are six master classes on contemporary Australian, Asian and global issues with focus on topics of leadership, entrepreneurship, business risk, adapting to change, corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

Half the programme modules will be taught by UOW-SBS’ own MBA professors and lecturers from abroad.

Sydney Business School is a graduate faculty of the University of Wollongong, which is in the top 2% of universities worldwide. The school has a strong and dynamic faculty committed to excellence in teaching and research, and to strengthening its partnership with the industry, government and businesses. UOW-SBS has also built a strong research focus with diverse interests across business-related disciplines.

Offered at INTI’s campus in Menara KH, Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Lumpur, the UOW-SBS MBA is conducted in a stimulating learning environment afforded by the new campus.

Blended learning at INTI incorporates lectures and innovative technologies that include online tools, multimedia content and the Blackboard learning system. Blackboard enables students to access course material, lecture notes, assignments and tutorials from the online platform and also to correspond on a one-to-one basis with instructors.

Other advanced software available include Epson’s Easy Interactive Tools, which allows instructors and students to highlight documents and images in various Microsoft formats on a projection screen, making presentations and lessons more compelling.

Among the most innovative online learning activities is the simulation programme, where students are exposed to real-world situations. Students are presented with workplace scenarios and required to find possible solutions to the problems that arise.

Innovation also brings about multiple industry projects, which enable students to work with employers on real business issues and solutions to gain experience and readiness for global employability.

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Place for drivers of research

SOME of the most dramatic innovations – innovations that have fundamentally changed the way in which we live – have emerged as a result of research undertaken in universities.

Ultrasonic, MRI, pacemakers, the seat-belt, broad spectrum antibiotics, LCDs and DNA fingerprinting are just a few examples of the many and major contributions to society that have come from research activity undertaken by universities worldwide.

University research takes many forms, ranging from work that is purely curiosity-driven (blue-skies) through to projects that may be applied and focused on providing new solutions to well-known problems.

Commercialisation and other research funding bodies are often particularly attracted to research that is highly recognisable problems in relatively short timescales.

Governments and other funding bodies are known problems.

Academics emphasise the importance of their freedom to pursue interesting topics that are driven by their curiosity alone rather than any immediate commercial opportunity. It is a research of this type that gives rise to some of the most transformative innovations.

When my colleague, the Nobel prize winner Sir Peter Mansfield, was working on magnetic resonance in the early 1970s, he was driven by his own innate curiosity and his desire to understand the interactions between magnetic fields and magnets. But the outputs of his work (and those of his collaborators) were to result in the development of magnetic resonance imaging – the basis of the MRI scanner – a major technological advance and medical diagnostic tool.

Without this fundamental research, research individuals who take the principles of MRI and develop and refine them to enable the widespread application of the technique, magnetic imaging would have no foundation to work with.

In contrast, investment in research to pursue interesting topics that do not necessarily seek to address a recognisable problem may be seen as more risky with much less certainty about positive outcomes. Both academics and policymakers debate the relative merit of these different types of research and often in quite emotive terms.

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SEGi University Group (SEGI) recently won a Silver award during the prestigious Putra Brand Awards – a clear recognition of its commitment to quality education.

The award was presented to SEGI’s vice-chancellor, Emeritus Prof Muhamad Awang. Since its founding in 1977, SEGI has held to the core belief of bringing out the best in all individuals, whether they be students or employees. The university strives to provide a complete learning experience that encourages natural talents in a holistic setting.

This is why SEGI is one of the few private higher learning institutions that provide a wide range of programmes that range from medicine to creative arts from certificate to PhD levels.

The objective of having five campuses at strategic locations in the Klang Valley, Penang and Sarawak is to make quality education accessible. With the widespread use of the Internet, SEGI is making full use of technology to close the qualifications gap.

SEGI’s PACE (Professional and Continuing Education) is a program that enables students to learn at their own pace and complete their studies while being able to attend to other obligations and have a fulfilling work-life balance.

Instead of attending scheduled classes at a venue, students can conveniently log on to their virtual classes from anywhere and at anytime. Currently, programmes included in the PACE programme are Master in Business Administration (MBA), Bachelor of Business Management (Honours) and Executive Diploma in Business Administration.

Well-known universities in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have established strong ties with SEGI. These connections offer students a wide variety of internationally recognised qualifications that can be completed locally. These international partnerships have


Building excellence in education

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Starting out as one of the three postgraduate units at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), the postgraduate unit at the School of Arts and Sciences was upgraded to become the Awang Had Salleh Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (AHSGS) on 23 September 2010. Inspired with the vision to become an eminent Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and serve as a centre of excellence in its core disciplinary fields in arts and sciences, the AHSGS provides superior Master’s and Ph.D programmes for the UUM College of Arts and Sciences (UUM CAS). Through world-class academic programmes increasingly recognized for their practical and applied nature, rigorous research, high-impact publications, and innovative consultations and solutions to multifaceted issues, the AHSGS hopes to transform students into graduates who will be effective at the workplace upon graduation and add lustre to the name of the School and instill pride in us all.

The programmes offered by the AHSGS are organised by five schools and two centres, namely the School of Computing, the School of Education and Modern Languages, the School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, the School of Quantitative Sciences and the School of Social Development, as well as the Centre for General Studies and the Language Centre. Each School or Centre provides specialisation programmes to cater to the needs of the students. Our main objectives are to offer academic programmes of the first order that also place emphasis on creating holistic and balanced individuals; develop analytical and creative individuals; provide an environment conducive to learning; and inculcate good values in students to help them become better leaders. The overarching objective, in line with the University’s charter and philosophy, is to develop competent and committed human capital to drive the nation forward and advance the well-being of humanity.

Today, the AHSGS accommodates a much more diverse population of students than ever before. Currently, the AHSGS has a student population of over 2,000, comprising Malaysian students and international students who hail from more than 29 countries from around the world. The countries represented are Indonesia, Thailand, Jordan, Libya, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, China, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Yemen, to name but a few.

According to Associate Professor Dr. Engku Muhammad Nazri Bin Engku Abu Bakar, who is both Assistant Vice-Chancellor of the UUM CAS and Dean of the AHSGS, there are now more international students, more female students, more students with young children, and increasingly more individuals who do not fit the traditional mould of full-time residential students. In consequence, there is a rising demand for programmes that reflect the new dynamics fostered by the changing clientele, programmes that encompass multiple disciplines and departments, programmes that involve scholarship traditionally classified as “applied” rather than “basic”, and programmes geared to the needs of specific clientele.

To cater to these new developments and demands, the AHSGS, with strong support from the management of UUM, has stepped up its efforts in earnest to ensure the fulfilment of its aim to produce knowledgeable and innovative thinkers and practitioners in the core disciplinary fields in arts and sciences. Among the new initiatives are the offer of postgraduate certificate programmes, executive training programmes, and diploma programmes in advanced study in a variety of fields; the setting up of two research institutes, namely the Research Institute for Computing & Technology and the Institute for Advanced Research in Education; and efforts invested in more extensive networking with renowned universities. In addition, to attract more talented and inspired students to join the AHSGS, the School offers financial aid and research grants.

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Universiti Malaya is set to become a major global player in research, publication, innovation and teaching.

Leading the way in research excellence

UNIVERSITY of Malaya (UM) reaffirmed its status as the premier research university in Malaysia for the fourth year running when it achieved its best ever position in the QS Asian University Rankings 2013, placing 33rd overall and first among all universities in Malaysia.

For the QS World University Ranking 2013, UM was at the 167th place. Recently, QS Stars conducted an independent audit of UM’s performance and the university achieved an overall maximum rating of five stars. QS Stars rates universities across the world against 30 criteria grouped into eight categories – research, employability, teaching, infrastructure, internationalisation, innovation, engagement and the university’s standing in specialist subjects.

Currently, with more than 150 postgraduate programmes including 30 master’s and three doctorate by research programmes being offered in various fields at 20 faculties, UM is set to become a major global player in research, publication, innovation and teaching.

Students have rated teaching highly at UM and the increasing number of postgraduates every year is testament to the quality of the research supervision provided. Research students at UM are not limited to supervision from just UM lecturers. UM has established Dual PhD programmes with 12 reputable universities from all over the world beginning with the University of Sydney in 2009 and more recently with the University of Nottingham, UK. This allows students to have access to not only supervisors but also facilities from both partner universities. The setting up of the Dual PhD programme provides a means of developing a long-term research partnership between institutions.

Recognising the impressive work UM has accomplished, in 2010, then Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) selected the UM Power Energy Dedicated Advance Centre as one of the six Higher Institutions’ Centre of Excellence (HiCoE) with focus on the development of renewable energy. In addition, the Nanotechnology & Catalysis Research Centre and Photonics Research Centre were named potential HiCoEs in 2011 and 2012, respectively. UM also has the support of more than 60 research centres covering a wide range of research subjects.

Located next to the Institute of Graduate Studies is a brand new complex that houses the Research Management and Monitoring Institute. This institute is a centralised research management facility for researchers within and out of the campus.

The complex houses units that manage research, innovation and commercialisation under one roof to provide the best management facility to advance research and innovation.

Six research clusters, including equitable society, frontier science, innovative technology, sustainability science, wellness, and humanities support the UM centres of excellence (CoE).

UM research has made a mark in several fields in terms of its achievements. UM is the National Centre for Research on the Antarctic. The Physics Department has numerous patents in photonic products. The photonics laboratory of UM is one of the most sophisticated photonics laboratories in the region.

The Department of Medical Microbiology was awarded the Nikkei Asia Prize in 2002 for its role in discovering the Nipah virus.

The Nipah Virus Research team received the Charles C. Shepard Award for best publication under the Laboratory Research Methods category from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC Atlanta, US).

The Combinatorial Technologies and Catalyst Research Centre (COMBICAT) is among the most equipped catalysis research centres in the region and the only combinatorial technology centre in South-East Asia.

Breakthroughs and discoveries in science, technology, humanities and in the arts and social sciences take place through collaborative efforts with several institutions across the region.

UM has also produced a total of 11,813 papers in high impact journals in the Web of Science (WoS), an online subscription-based scientific citation indexing service maintained by Thomson Reuters, and a total of 15,038 papers for Scopus, a bibliographic database containing abstracts and citations for academic journal articles, from 2005 to March this year.

UM’s research value is further reflected by the number of citations received at 52,151 for ISI WoS and 68,259 for Scopus.

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Postgraduate degree for career boost

Postgraduate qualifications are highly favoured in industries such as engineering, finance and management as well as health and science. In fact, postgraduate qualifications are mandatory in some industries and specialized jobs.

Having better career prospects or a better salary package are not the only reasons why people should pursue a postgraduate degree.

Heriot-Watt University Malaysia offers scholarships for postgraduate degrees in business, built environment and engineering.

The university is awarding all high-achieving graduates who have obtained a bachelor’s degree of second class upper and above a chance to apply for 20% off total tuition fees, subject to an interview and panel assessment. Further scholarships are also available from the university’s corporate and industry partners such as YTL Corporation Berhad, Great Eastern Life Malaysia and MNRB Holdings Berhad.

Heriot-Watt University Malaysia employs a student-centred approach to learning, which encourages students to develop independence, self-discipline and analytical skills, which are sought after by employers.

The university’s ambition is to provide quality British education that extends beyond the lecture halls, and this is best expressed by its state-of-the-art green campus in Putrajaya.

The purpose-built Green Building Index-compliant campus has a lakeside frontage and is eco-friendly, being energy and water efficient. The Heriot-Watt University Putrajaya campus will be Malaysia’s first purpose-built green campus.

For more information, call 03-8881 0918, e-mail hwum@hw.ac.uk or visit www.hw.edu.my
Flexible Entry is an alternative pathway that allows individuals with work experience to enrol in diploma, bachelor’s and master’s programmes. The Open Entry Admission System was introduced by the then Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2006. Open University Malaysia (OUM) was the first university to be granted approval by MOHE to accept students based on the Open Entry Admission criteria. Open Entry was later renamed Flexible Entry by OUM.

According to OUM’s vice-president Prof Ir Dr Rosli Hamir, MOHE outlined several criteria that must be met before students can be accepted into a programme. They include age, minimum academic qualifications and relevant work experience. For entry into a bachelor’s degree programme, a candidate must be at least 21 years old on Jan 1 of the year of application and must possess a minimum PMR/SRP/LCE or its equivalent qualification. The candidate must also have work experience that is relevant to the programme.

For a master’s degree programme, the candidate must be at least 35 years old on Jan 1 of the year of application and must have a minimum STPM/diploma/A-Levels or its equivalent qualification. The candidate must also have work experience that is relevant to the programme.

Upon fulfilling the criteria, students must then sit for the Flexible Entry assessment for a minimum fee prior to their admission. There is a self-preparatory programme on OUM’s website to help students with the assessment.

“The Flexible Entry assessment is an instrument used to gauge the level of readiness and competency of the individual prior to joining a programme,” explains Prof Rosli.

Recently, OUM was granted approval by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to use the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) criteria to enrol students into its diploma programmes. Generally, the process involves assessing prior experiential learning that can be obtained from various methods, including formal schooling, life experiences, job training, independent study, volunteer work and hobbies.

Prof Rosli adds that all OUM’s programmes are open for flexible admission. Currently, 30% of OUM’s semester intake comprises these learners. Since it first started in 2006, more than 13,000 learners have been enrolled through this system.

Additionally, OUM has played an active role in the development of the National Blueprint of Lifelong Learning and is an active partner of MQA in the delivery of the APEL nationwide. OUM is a well-known provider of part-time programmes and caters mostly to adult learners.

“Our classes are only held twice a month and eight times per semester. We are very focused on online and self-learning. Adult learners usually have a lot of family and work commitments that prevent them from spending many hours in a classroom during the weekend. This is why OUM’s blended learning approach is a blessing for thousands of adult learners who want to further their studies,” says Prof Rosli.

For more information, visit www.oum.edu.my.

— Prof Ir Dr Rosli Hamir
**Enhancing quality of childhood education**

The Ministry of Education Malaysia proposed to enforce the rule that all private preschool teachers must have a minimum qualification of a diploma. This is geared towards streamlining the educational standards of all private preschool teachers by 2020. Currently, 26,810 early childhood education teachers in private preschools are registered with the ministry. Out of that number, only 2.6% possess a diploma in early childhood education. This is a figure to be concerned about, especially where special needs children are involved.

According to Open University Malaysia's vice-chancellor Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Anuwar Ali, OUM is one of 11 private institutions in Malaysia that offer a diploma programme in early childhood education. The programme aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to be employed in the childcare sector and in preschools.

Despite not having the necessary early childhood education qualifications, many preschool teachers possess substantial experience in teaching. Despite this, the ministry has relaxed the minimum entry requirements to only two credits in the SPM examination plus three years of working experience or five years of working experience for those with only one SPM credit. This entry requirement, however, will be valid only until 2018. This is to ensure the success of the ministry's aim, that all private preschool teachers have at least a diploma in early childhood education as minimum qualification by 2020.

Senior lecturer and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme coordinator Dr Azhar Md Adnan says that their students are given the opportunity to attend and obtain a certificate in Kursus Asuhan Awal Kanak-Kanak Perma (KPKA) (Early Childhood Education Programme).

"This is an added incentive as they will be able to carry out their practicum at their respective preschool centres without having to take an extended leave for it," he says. OUM is an educational institution that caters to working adults.

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Since its inception more than three decades ago, SEGi University Group has been offering innovative programmes to equip students with the knowledge and skills required by employers. With the Internet, SEGi is making superior education within reach (by establishing) an online university. Aptly named PACE (Professional and Continuing Education), students can learn at their own pace. They are also able to complete their studies with the assurance that they can still attend to other obligations and have a fulfilling work-life balance.

Instead of attending scheduled classes at a venue that can take up additional time, cost and effort to commute, students can conveniently log on to their classes at any time of the day and at any location that has access to the Internet. Unlike other online programmes, PACE provides students with guided and independent learning. This means students attend classes once a month and revision classes are also provided for one weekend per semester for each subject.

Aspiring students need not be concerned about being alone while furthering their studies as the online access will give them the opportunity to network with fellow coursemates, meet their lecturers and gain additional support that they may need. The number of subjects to pursue in a semester is entirely up to the students.

SEGi also provides a guided learning plan to ensure students get the best out of their lessons, where they are provided with study guides and strategies for coping with coursework and exams.

Graduates of the SEGi PACE programme will obtain the same qualification as a SEGi on-campus student and they also share the same lecturers.

For more information on PACE, call 03-6145 1777 or 1800 887 344 or e-mail to askme@segi.edu.my or visit www.segi.edu.my

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  This programme focuses on bringing out the students’ best, making them expert communicators. It provides students the technological and methodological know-how, management foundations, as well as knowledge of the latest trends and developments in mass communication practices. Just like the business administration degree, the programme also sharpens core interpersonal skills. Graduates can also take the major step towards completing a bachelor’s degree.

There is a wide range of business programmes available under PACE.

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Jeffrey Cheah Foundation

Building a World of Difference
AeU seeks to provide students with the foundations of educational practice with its Master in Education programme.

**Hone your teaching knowledge**

In many countries, a master’s degree has become essential for career advancement in teaching and fosters continuous personal improvement of an individual. A master’s degree in education is often conferred to educators advancing in their field, where the objective is to equip learners with up-to-date knowledge and specialised skills that enhance the individual’s professional career.

Inspired to become a leading higher learning institution in education, Asia e University (AeU) has developed the Master in Education (MEd) programme to meet the growing needs of education experts in the industry.

**AeU’s Master in Education (MEd)**

Driven by the market needs, AeU’s School of Education and Cognitive Sciences (SECS) offers the two-year MEd programme with specialisations in teaching English as a second language (TESL), nursing education, early childhood education, educational psychology, instructional technology, educational management, science education, educational assessment and evaluation, curriculum and instruction, and higher education teaching. This programme is suited to the needs of the industry and aimed to hone students’ teaching knowledge, competencies as educators and their research skills. It is highly flexible and accommodates candidates from all working backgrounds.

Non-graduates with lower qualifications but with relevant experience can also apply for the master’s degree programme under the open entry path. The programme is delivered through either online or blended learning. Blended learning is a combination of face-to-face tutorials and online learning. Tutorial sessions are conducted by qualified and experienced academic facilitators.

Approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), AeU’s MEd is one of the few fully accredited master’s in education programmes in Malaysia.

“Our MEd equips students with the relevant theory and practice to function in a global society and teach effectively in culturally and socially diverse classrooms. Our MEd programme can be applied through the conventional normal entry path or open entry path. For the normal entry path, candidates should have a recognised bachelor’s degree or have two years of related work experience. AeU offers more than 40 academic programmes at all levels, ranging from diplomas to PhDs. All academic programmes are internationally benchmarked, approved by the MoE and accredited by MQA. AeU allows flexibility in terms of payment of fees and study options to tailor to students’ learning process and their needs and lifestyle. The university offers various financial aids and incentives to assist students during their period of study, including AeU Merit Scholarship for top-performing students. For more information, call 1300 300 238 or visit www.aeu.edu.my.”

**MEd learning outcomes**

The MEd seeks to provide students with the philosophical, sociological and psychological foundations of educational practice. Students will acquire competencies and skills for solving particular educational problems, the principles and techniques needed to work effectively in a wide range of educational settings, the ability to examine several models of instruction that meet diverse learning needs, learn how to promote the effective use of technology in a learner-centred environment and understand the multiple means of assessing and evaluating diverse student learning.

**Quality programmes made accessible**

Admissions for the MEd programme can be applied through the conventional normal entry path or open entry path. For the normal entry path, candidates should have a recognised bachelor’s degree or have two years of related work experience.
Innovation takes centre stage

A SHOWCASE of the most innovative and impactful research accomplishments of 20 selected PhD students from the Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia, was held late last year at the Australian Centre for the Moving Images (ACMI), Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia.

This inaugural Faculty of Information Technology (FIT) Innovation day attracted a number of industry and company chief technical officers and chief information officers.

This provided an opportunity for the guests to engage with the students about their PhD research. It also gave students the opportunity to develop and build rapport with the industry and the wider community. As a result of the event, students secured interviews and collaborative research projects.

An independent panel of industry judges comprising Judith Bennett, Business4Group; Luke Visser, Agilent Technologies; Patrick Maes, ANZ; and Richard Ferrers, ANDS, selected the best of the PhD poster presentations.

The award went to Eranda Lakshantha from Monash University Malaysia for his research project Intuitive Human Robot Interaction with Augmented Reality.

"There is an increasing use of robots in our every day environment. In many cases, robots are operated by people who have little experience with these complex machines. Through my research, I am looking at creating a successful human robot interface (HRI) system that will reduce the workload of the one operating it. It will also make the collaboration between humans and robots easy and seamless," explains Lakshantha, a second year PhD student at the School of IT, Monash University Malaysia.

Building on the event’s theme, the topic of the keynote address given by Dr Chris Behrenbruch, co-founder and chief executive officer of ImaginAb, was Innovating with Industry. Dr Behrenbruch spoke on the ways industry and academic researchers can engage with each other, citing examples, including that of Genii Medical, a health care IT company.

Founded by Prof Ingrid Zukerman and Dr Masud Moshtaghi, researchers from the Faculty of IT, Genii is a health care IT company that develops innovative technology solutions for the aged care and assisted living environment.

Industry guests were also provided an insight into Nodal, a generative music software, when Assoc Prof Jon McCormack from the Caulfield School of IT demonstrated his research into the creative possibilities of computers and computation with a live generative music performance. Nodal was recognised with the Eureka Prize for Innovation in Computer Science in 2012.

The event was hosted by Prof Freider Seible, dean of the Faculty of Information Technology and dean of the Faculty of Engineering; Prof Maria Garcia de la Banda, deputy dean of the Faculty of Information Technology; and Prof Kai Ming Ting, associate dean of research and training. The faculty will run a similar research industry innovation event later this year.

For more information on the School of IT and its programmes at Monash University Malaysia, visit www.infotech.monash.edu.my
Taking the lead in the Asian business revolution

ELP’s ELM Graduate School (ELM-GS) introduces a creative way of thinking about the three critical elements of entrepreneurship, leadership, and management in an integrative manner. The ELM Framework provides a powerful understanding of the multifaceted role of individuals, teams and organisations and how they interplay to create, manage and sustain a business over its different phases. The ELM Framework underlies the philosophy of the ELM Graduate School’s executive education and the way we teach and learn business in the HELP Group.

Dean of ELM Graduate School Datin Dr Wendy Liow says, “The change in name here, along with a new mandate for more academic support, more services being offered to graduate research candidates and more research into how best to support our graduate research community”. Dr Liow has 25 years of experience in senior management roles and responsibilities in four Fortune 500 companies. Together with other faculty members, she aims to build a culture of distributed leadership with a strong shared vision to make ELM-GS an exemplary success.

To actualise this, the ELM Graduate School is led by a faculty of academic experts and experienced industry practitioners. Within the ELM Framework, the faculty uses a variety of teaching methods, including the case method, problem-based learning, research-led teaching and simulation studies. Group discussion is stressed. Formal lectures and class discussions are supported by interactions with C-1 executives in the ELM Executive Education Forum, where successful entrepreneurs and CEOs from Asia share their experiences.

The ELM Graduate School offers 13 masters programmes with useful specialisations. They are capped by the DBA and the PhD by research. The DBA is a reflective learning experience for senior executives on practical and pragmatic issues. The PhD serves the needs for rigorous academic training in original research.

In the last 27 years, HELP has gathered a large alumni in Malaysia and abroad, many of whom are successful entrepreneurs in their own right, leading executives in multinational corporations, senior government officials and academics.

Master of Entrepreneurship graduate Melvin Koh says, “In today’s testing environment, we must learn to trust our instincts yet remember our values, lead with wisdom, work thrice as hard and, most importantly, apply and adapt into practice the advice, lessons, models, knowledge and skills that we have gained from our lecturers. I know that ELM will be able to guide many individuals on their journey towards a meaningful life”. Koh is a human performance coach and a certified knowledge manager from The International Knowledge Management Institute of America. He has successfully led various strategic business units (SBU) in the training & consulting industry, exhibition and MICE (industry, marketing and services industries), manufacturing, and interior fit out industry regionally.

Koh is currently the general manager of Jalin Realty International, and is responsible for the company’s product offerings and brand across South-East Asia. Recognising the needs and demands of executive education, the School of Executive Education is dedicated in offering professional development training, customised short courses and certificate programmes in a broad range of disciplines. It draws from the breadth and depth of the expertise and experience of the HELP faculty members and that of HELP’s collaborators to develop programmes that focus on providing the competencies to do business in a rapidly changing world. Some of these collaborations include a recent collaboration with Pembangunan Sumber Manusa Berhad and SME Corp Malaysia via the SME@ University programme. HELP also works with various professional bodies, government-linked corporations and large multinational corporations for its in-house training.

For more information about ELM Graduate School’s programmes, call 03-2711 2000 or visit elm.help.edu.my

THE Universiti Tunu Abdul Rahman Bachelor of Science (Hons) Architecture degree course under the Faculty of Engineering and Science’s Department of Architecture and Sustainable Design is a three-year course that consists of various inter-disciplinary subjects that provide students with a solid foundation in architectural design, architectural communication, construction, architectural practice, and architectural theory and history.

Head of the Department of Architecture and Sustainable Design Dr Lim Poh Hm, explains that the programme is developed to expose students to integrated problem-solving environments that promote analytical and creative thinking. The programme provides sound technical knowledge in architectural design, conceptual development, building construction, architectural detailing, structural design, building services, architectural history and architectural graphic communications. It also enhances students’ skills in presentation, computer studies, management and practice.

The programme is recognised by the Board of Architects Malaysia (LAM) Part I programme. Upon completing the bachelor’s degree, students can opt for a master’s degree in architecture, which will lead them to LAM Part II, part of the requirement towards attaining a professional architect qualification.

Upon completion of the UTAR Bachelor of Science (Hons) Architecture programme, graduates can expect to work in the building industry as assistant designers, architectural illustrators, project supervisors, assistant project managers, contractors, building materials sales executives and so on. Others may opt to further their education in other related fields such as architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, urban design and interior design.

For more information, call 03-7958 2628 (PJ campus) or visit www.utar.edu.my

Koh: “I know that ELM will be able to guide many individuals on their journey towards a meaningful life.”
A POSTGRADUATE qualification does not only make one a standout, it also displays the commitment and dedication in keeping one’s knowledge and skills updated and it helps fast track one’s career.

Taylor’s University vice-chancellor and president Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said says, “The nation’s aspiration of having a knowledge-based economy and achieving high income status begins with education.

“With that in mind, Taylor’s Graduate School aims to enhance the work and professional life of its students while creating an ideal platform for networking and exchange of ideas among peers from different countries, cultures and professions.

“Taylor’s Graduate School specialises in research skills development and sets itself apart through its team of top academicians, quality standards and industry recognition. We aim to develop productive professionals in specialised fields by offering them flexibility in terms of the programme structure,” continues Prof Hassan.

He adds that Taylor’s postgraduate programme students are employees from blue-chip companies, the government, industry and businesses, who graduated with a Masters qualification does not only help fast track one’s career.

Professor Foo graduated from Taylor’s and has been working in the hospitality industry for 13 years, and in 2011 he was appointed as a senior general manager for one of the world’s top hotel chains. This is something he achieved because he was focused and determined to achieve my ambition of completing my master’s degree.”

“With that, Taylor’s Graduate School has been tailoring its programme to suit students needs to ensure a better learning experience for the students,” said Prof Foo.

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Taylor’s Graduate School aims to enhance work and professional life. One of the alumni of Taylor’s Graduate School is Victor Foo, vice-president of First World Hotels & Resorts Sdn Bhd, who graduated with a Masters in International Hospitality Management from Taylor’s University recently, shared his experience of pursuing his master’s degree. He described it as enjoyable as he was able to tap into the insight of the industry professionals who were his coursemates and engage in intellectual discussions about the benefits of theory versus practical applications.

“This healthy exchange during classes facilitated the transfer of knowledge of the latest academic and industry trends. The excellent campus facilities were also plus points for me,” says Foo.

Developing skills in education management

In an effort to develop education leadership and management skills, Wawasan Open University (WOU) is expanding its Master of Education programme to include education management.

Offered through WOU’s School of Education, Languages and Communications (SELC), working professionals have the option of pursuing the Master of Education (MEd) programme in education management via open distance learning (ODL) for a broader perspective into the issues and challenges confronting education.

The MEd in Education Management is a 45-credit programme that can be completed in four semesters or spread out according to a learner’s pace and schedule. It aims to provide students with knowledge and skills in educational administration and management.

“Strong and knowledgeable school leadership is required to produce significant improvement in the local education system. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 takes cognisance of this fact and calls for every school to have a high-quality central and supporting leadership team to provide instructional leadership and drive overall school performance,” says Prof Santhiram Raman, dean of SELC.

This MEd particularly benefits people aspiring to be in administrative positions in the Ministry of Education or educators aspiring to be in administrative positions in the Ministry of Education or educators.”

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