

## Reaching further, wider across Malaysia



WOU signs MoA with SIC (right) and IP.

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## WOU opens up more Learning Centres



Signing of Agreement between EWIC and WOU by Prof Ho and Dato' Murad (right).

As the people's university, Wawasan Open University (WOU) has set forth the mission to make learning opportunities available to all, including those living in remote areas, by dotting the map of Malaysia with its Learning Centres.

The University is all about increasing access to its educational programmes in order to reach a larger segment of the population. It is this underlying philosophy that led WOU to recently embark on new smart partnerships with three established institutions – more are in the pipeline – to set up additional learning centres in areas where it currently has no physical presence.

WOU inked an agreement with East-West International College (EWIC), Seremban, on May 28, and subsequently with Stradford International College (SIC), Prai, and Institut Profesional (IP), Alor Setar, on June 4. The Learning Centres will assist WOU with the enrolment and teaching of students who do part-time study at WOU, beginning from the July 2015 intake.

Following the signings, WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye remarked: "WOU shares a common vision with Stradford International College and Institut Profesional

to address the increasing need and demand of knowledge workers in various segments of our K-economy for tertiary qualifications to enhance their career prospects."

"We want to provide wider access to higher education and in the process build up the professional human resource capacity so as to increase the productivity of the workforce," Prof Ho added. "WOU is working towards setting up a few more Learning Centres across Malaysia through smart collaboration with like-minded institutions of higher learning, to extend our market presence. More students will be able to attend their monthly face-to-face tutorials at centres located closer to them than before."

The Chief Executive Officer of SIC, Kumar Ghosh Vasudevan, said the college decided on the partnership because WOU is recognised "as a trusted and highly reputed brand in the education sector with well-designed infrastructure in terms of programme development to enhance student learning experiences".

"This partnership gives us the opportunity to work together more closely towards our common goal, the pursuit of affordable and quality education for all," he said. "Moreover,

## 2 Vice Chancellor's VOICE

To all our staff, students and readers, I trust you have had a wonderful Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration with family and friends. It is also an opportunity for friends to come together and celebrate the principles that bind people of different faiths – a commitment to peace, justice, equality and compassion towards our fellow human beings. These bonds are far stronger than the differences that too often drive us apart. We shall continue to celebrate such festivals together in the spirit of harmony and peace!

Time flies swiftly and we now enter the latter half of the year, brimming with hope and ready actions to seek out latent opportunities and at the same time confront emerging challenges to further grow the University in a sustainable manner.

The reaffirmed support from the President of Gerakan, Dato' Mah Siew Keong, extended to WOU during his visit to the main campus in April is gratefully welcomed. We appreciate President Mah's pledge of continued party support to the University.

Speaking of opportunities to grow the University, we are pleased with the initial outcome of our recent intensified move to set up Learning Centres with like-minded, well-established academic institutions that are located in various parts of the country. WOU has already formed such strategic partnerships with four institutions this year, and I am confident that more of such Centres will be established in the future.

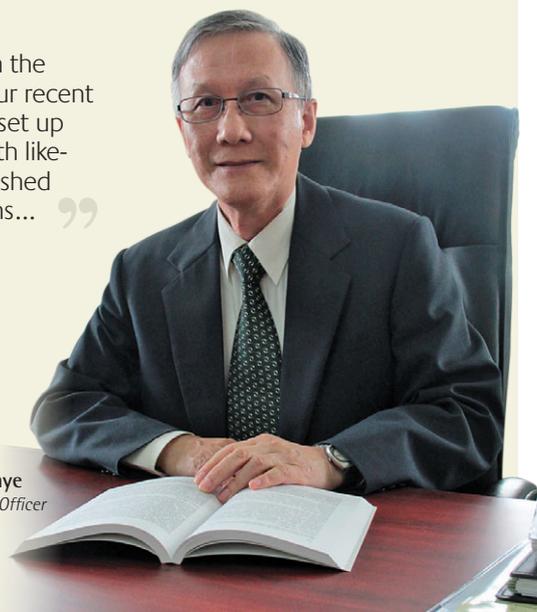
We are especially delighted that one such Learning Centre has been set up at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) which is well-equipped with excellent laboratory facilities for training students of our Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Mechatronics programme beginning in July 2015 at PSDC.

On another front, WOU has linked up with the Global University of Islamic Finance (INCEIF) to offer Islamic Finance courses for our Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) students starting from next year. In the meantime, preparations are in progress to introduce the new MBA in Logistics and Supply Chain Management programme, in close consultation with a well-known global supply chain company.

With regard to WOU's full-time undergraduate study programmes, we want to encourage more school-leavers and diploma holders to register for our degree programmes. We are also proud of our first batch of full-time students who had recently completed their internship in various workplaces in and around Penang. The internship afforded them real-world experiences and opened their eyes to the work challenges and their own capabilities.

Last but not least, I congratulate the Centre for Professional Development & Continuing Education (WOU-PACE) for having successfully organised the Holiday English Camp for Thai children. I look forward to more of such educational activities as well as continuing professional development courses from PACE catering to a wider spectrum of target groups.

“We are pleased with the initial outcome of our recent intensified move to set up Learning Centres with like-minded, well-established academic institutions...”



**Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye**  
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer

the partnership complements our present sets of courses with a pathway as well as the opportunity to offer other areas of studies. This strategic alliance also gives SIC the opportunity to explore the newly emerging and ever growing market of adult education industry through WOU's e-Learning platform equipped with good infrastructure and facilities.”

Meanwhile, IP Education Director Loh Shy Tyug stressed: “WOU has a strong management team that offers support and outlines the procedures clearly, and is committed to its Learning Centre in Kedah. We also find WOU's open distance learning (ODL) courses to be of quality, flexible, and affordable, benefiting the local people.”

“We look forward to providing quality ODL opportunities and additional choices of courses to the community who wish to pursue tertiary qualifications for personal and professional development. With this collaboration, we expect to increase our student base of adult learners with the support of WOU,” she said.

The CEO of EWIC, Dato' Dr Haji Abdul Murad Ahmad, was impressed with the “very outstanding programmes” of WOU in terms of quality of the course materials and delivery of ODL. “WOU's standing as a Learning Centre is of high calibre. From their responses during our dealings, we find the WOU management to be excellent and efficient compared to other ODL providers,” he said.

“WOU has given us the opportunity to provide both online and traditional modes of education. Together with WOU, we can provide updated knowledge and education to the people in Seremban, the State of Negeri Sembilan and the nearby areas bordering the State.

“We believe that as WOU students, they will gain the required knowledge on business, electronics and manufacturing principles, and relevant practical skills that will empower them to build up their job, career or business,” said Dato' Murad.



Prof Ho with Loh (right) and Kumar.

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KDN Permit: PP 14958/11/2012 (031535)  
Published by **Wawasan Open University**  
Wholly owned by Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd (700364-W)  
Printed by Percetakan U-Tech Sdn Bhd  
7, Solok Sungai Pinang 4,  
11600 Sungai Pinang, Pulau Pinang

# Learning Centre for WOU Mechatronics programme at PSDC

Students enrolling for the new Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Mechatronics (BTME) programme which begins in July will have access to excellent state-of-the-art laboratory facilities at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC).

This comes in the wake of WOU having set up a Learning Centre at the PSDC specifically to facilitate the offering of this programme as part of a collaboration between the two institutions.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between WOU and PSDC was cemented during a ceremony at the PSDC on 19 May 2015. It was signed by Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, WOU Vice Chancellor, and Muhamed Ali Hajah Mydin, Chief Executive Officer of PSDC.

Associate Prof Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei, WOU's Dean of School of Science & Technology (SST), and Lim Wei Chen, Chief Operating Officer of PSDC, acted as witnesses. Among those in attendance were WOU's Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, PSDC's School of Engineering Dean Tham Kok Kee, PSDC managers and WOU senior management staff.

"The smart partnership marks a significant milestone in our respective roadmaps to make higher education accessible to as many people as possible," Prof Ho said in his speech at the occasion.

"We understand that PSDC has heavily invested in its laboratory facilities, and this is greatly appreciated since it allows access to its partners, including WOU, for the purpose of special hands-on training as required by the industry," he said.

Also arising from the strategic partnership is a new study pathway in which graduates of PSDC's diploma programmes benefit through smooth articulation into WOU's mechatronics degree programme.

"They will study at WOU, use the laboratory facilities of PSDC, and ultimately earn a WOU degree. Indeed this joint venture is a win-win situation for both our institutions," Prof Ho said.

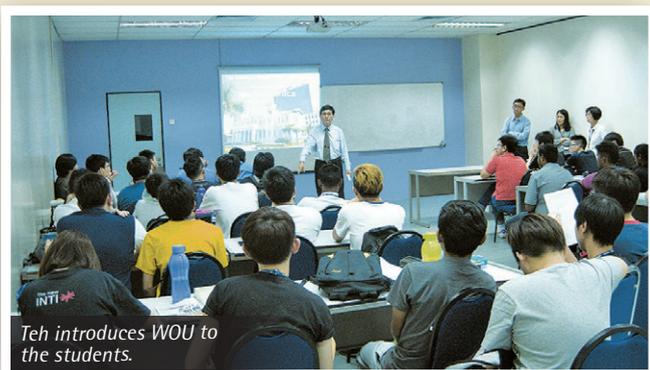
The Learning Centre at PSDC is one of several new centres to be set up by WOU this year and which the Ministry of Education has been notified of.

Muhamed Ali expressed optimism in BTME significantly benefiting the PSDC students as well as the existing workforce in the mechanical and electronics industry. "We believe that through this programme, students will stand to gain the necessary knowledge on mechatronic engineering principles and practical skills that will empower them to design systematic solutions for mechatronic engineering problems," he said.



All smiles: (from right) Dr Wendy, Prof Ho, Muhamed Ali and Lim.

## Mechatronics programme preview draws interest



Teh introduces WOU to the students.

About 45 diploma students at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) were recently given a glimpse of a new pathway towards achieving a degree, when they attended a presentation on WOU's Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Mechatronics (BTME) programme.

The students currently plan to undergo industrial training from September to November once they complete their diploma studies later this year. They now have an option of taking their education even further and gaining an added qualification, with the convenience of WOU's new Learning Centre for BTME students sited at the PSDC premise itself.

The 90-minute preview, held at PSDC on 20 May 2015, was conducted by Dr Teoh Ping Chow, Senior Lecturer from the School of Science & Technology, and Teh Kim Kow who is Head of WOU's Penang Regional Centre.

The event saw many of the students expressing interest in subsequently enrolling for the programme which sees its inaugural intake in

July this year. The BTME is offered by WOU via open distance learning (ODL) in Penang.

In explaining the programme Dr Teoh spoke about the study progression, particularly the block credit transfer granted to the Diploma in Mechatronics Engineering students from PSDC who enrol for BTME at WOU. He informed them of a 37-credit hour course exemption that would allow them to complete the 124-credit hour programme within three years.

The students were generally inquisitive about career prospects, the total tuition fees, and on whether they could pursue full-time study to fast-track their higher education.

Dr Teoh advised students who opt to take up BTME as a full-time programme to ensure they get some practical work experience, even if just on a voluntary basis. He also assured them of affordability in undertaking the degree at WOU, with tuition fees further reduced due to the course exemptions offered.



Students listen to the programme preview at PSDC.

# Optimism for advancement through WOU mechatronics degree



Caleb Ong Boon Chung



Heng Yee Jie

Pioneering students of the Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Mechatronics (BTME) programme have expressed great enthusiasm and optimism on the eve of its commencement at WOU in July.

The sentiments for the programme, which is offered through the School of Science & Technology, stem from the fact that its focus is very much related to the nature of their work and that they can pursue it without needing to pause their careers.

One of them is **Caleb Ong Boon Chung** who holds a Diploma in Automotive Technology from a private college in Petaling Jaya and has been working as Project Engineer with Prestige Dynamic Industries in Prai since April. The 27-year-old from Bukit Mertajam sees the degree as a vital springboard towards achieving his ambition of becoming an engineering department head or manager.

"To be honest, with the modern technologies in society nowadays, most of the mechanical systems are controlled by electronics, and what I learn from the BTME programme will help me climb higher in my career," Caleb said. "The mechanical and electronics knowledge will help me perform better and give me the confidence to share my opinion and information with my customers during the design stage."

**Heng Yee Jie**, who works as Senior Technician at IQ-Group in Bayan Lepas since January is confident that the BTME will help him significantly

in his current job as he now works on troubleshooting and designing of automation products.

"This programme is a combination of mechanical engineering and electrical engineering, so it is helpful for my career as I will be able to master both mechanical and electrical related issues," said the 21-year-old from Relau who is equipped with a Diploma in Mechatronic Engineering from Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC).

"When I saw WOU offering a part-time degree in mechatronics, it was a great opportunity for me," he added. "I thought I might need to quit my job to study as, before seeing WOU, I had found only full-time study programmes in Penang."

**Ramesh Karuppiah**, 24, who works as Technician at Renesas Semiconductor, believes the degree from WOU will help turn his dream of becoming a successful engineer into a reality. "Although I have all the skills of an engineer, I am still a technician. This situation is what motivated me to take up BTME at WOU," he said.

Ramesh, who holds a *Diploma Kemahiran Malaysia* from PSDC, prefers the part-time BTME programme as he can continue working while studying and because "whatever I am doing in my current job is related to my studies".



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## Variety of tuition fee rebates for new students

WOU is offering various student finance options to encourage working adults to enrol for part-time study in any one of the over 40 undergraduate and postgraduate degree studies.

Students whose employers are members of the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) will receive tuition fee rebates of up to RM1,100 in the first semester when they register for at least two courses, beginning with the July 2015 intake.

The University is also extending this generous offer to members of selected non-governmental organisations whose employees will likewise enjoy up to RM1,100 rebate.

Access to financial assistances is also available to students whose employers are not MEF members. Companies may apply to become an

education partner, free-of-charge, under WOU's Valued Partnership Programme. Once they are accepted, their employees will receive up to RM1,000 in rebate each. To date, close to 150 companies nationwide have become WOU's education partners for the purpose of corporate and professional enhancement.

All these 'not-to-be-missed' financial assistances are given in the first semester when students enrol for at least two courses. Furthermore, employees of MEF members or VPP partners, along with members of selected NGOs, will also be able to enjoy the third course rebate offer of up to RM200 in every semester.

For details on WOU's VPP incentive, visit [www.wou.edu.my/Value\\_Partnership\\_Programme.html](http://www.wou.edu.my/Value_Partnership_Programme.html)

# Thai school kids enjoy learning English at WOU camp

About thirty school children from across Thailand were recently treated to a memorable and fun-filled experience in learning English when they converged at the WOU main campus in Penang to participate in a 15-day Holiday English Programme.

The students aged 8 to 16 years from various places like Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Pattani, Hat Yai, Satun, Yala and Narathiwat were exposed to specially-designed teaching materials aimed at improving their language skills, both conversational and in writing.

The practical and enjoyable lessons saw the children experiencing interactive activities that included a visit to the Batik Factory, learning the art of food carving and guidance on writing recipes.

The classes, conducted by WOU's Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education (PACE), were held at the WOU main campus from 30 March to 17 April 2015.

"We know that children learn best when they are having fun. That's why we designed a programme that not only helped them improve their language skills, but which was also enjoyable and helped build their confidence," said Prof Mohandas Menon, the Acting Director of PACE.

"We kept the children motivated by making sure they were learning in a stimulating, happy and friendly environment."

A simple closing ceremony was held on the final day, with the students themselves presenting cultural dance performances. WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye was on hand to present certificates of completion to the students.

The holiday programme's Thai organisers as well as the children's parents were generally receptive and pleased with the way the entire camp was organised by WOU, and expressed keenness to establish a long-term relationship with the University.



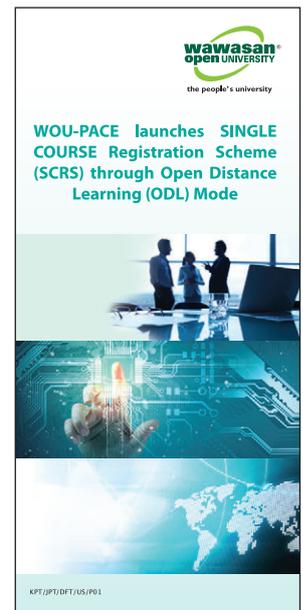
Teamwork in doing the group assignment.



WOU staff pose with the Thai school kids.



Prof Menon



## Single courses offered to working professionals

WOU's Centre for Professional Development & Continuing Education (PACE) will provide single courses for interested learners, starting from the July semester. The scheme is offered on part-time mode through open distance learning (ODL) for the convenience of working adults.

"In today's fast changing world, working professionals and employers need to constantly update their knowledge and re-equip themselves to remain productive and relevant to the work environment," said Prof Mohandas Menon, Acting Director of PACE.

Professionals now have the option of registering for just one, two or a mix of courses to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Their employers can send or sponsor them for re-training, with those contributing to the federal government's Human Resources Development Fund able to claim from the fund.

Learners can take up any of the wide range of courses offered as part of WOU's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Those who participate in assessment will earn credit for the course and receive a Certificate of Achievement from WOU-PACE. They may later transfer the credits gained towards completing a programme and earning a WOU degree, if so desired.

Those who take up a course without undergoing assessment will receive a Certificate of Completion.

The courses include Business Accounting, Company Law, Principles and Practices of Management, Banking and Financial Systems in Malaysia, Strategic Marketing, Psychology and the Workplace, Creative Writing, Visual Programming, Database Management Systems, Digital Electronics, Construction Project Management, and Managing Human Resources.

The list of courses is available at [www.wou.edu.my](http://www.wou.edu.my). Those interested can call the WOU toll-free Careline at 1-300-888-968 or WOU-PACE at 04-2180 333, or contact any WOU Regional Centre.

## Full-time students recall benefits from internships

An internship can be a pivotal experience for a student as it places him or her in the real-world of the workplace, away from the "textbook" environment of academia. Six students from WOU's full-time Bachelor of Business (Hon) in Management programme, who recently completed internship tenures of between two and three months, spoke about the knowledge and skills they picked up, and the impact of their internship on their careers.



**Kang Kong Sing**, Interned as Marketing Assistant at Curas Ltd, Penang.

Kang, 27, found that he was able to apply what he learnt at WOU, as well the experience he had gathered before as a wholesaler and retailer of kitchen appliances, during his internship with Curas.

Reporting directly to the general manager, he was mainly tasked with sourcing of products prior to purchase. He contacted the manufacturer of medical devices, and negotiated on prices and shipments.

"I knew how to negotiate and use the right business language for my communications in the real world," he said.

"What I learnt during the internship is that the quality advertised is very important - the quality of the product," he stressed

Kang also saw that he could apply knowledge from the course he had undertaken at WOU on *Business Research Method* when doing the sampling and preparing reports for the company.

"Internship is good especially to help fresh students understand first-hand the real working environment," he said. "Although I have had working experience, I still found the learning I received from WOU's courses useful in my training," he said.

**Ng Zhai Poh**, Trainee at Quality Assurance Department, SAM Meerkat (M) Sdn Bhd, Penang.

"I reported to the Quality System Engineer, and we reported to the QA Manager."

Ng felt he had upgraded himself through the internship as he emerged from the experience with renewed confidence to face the real work environment.

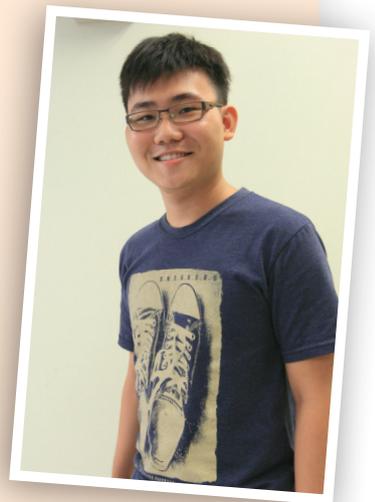
In particular, he found the *Managing Information Systems* course at WOU of much help as it showed him how to use programmes like Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel to prepare reports on quality audit for the QA manager whom he was reporting to.

The *Organisational Behaviour & Management* course also taught him how to work well with colleagues. "I was also exposed to ISO, and all these have developed my job interest in quality," he said.

The 23-year-old's main task was to help conduct an internal audit on all the departments inside two of the company's plants which are the manufacturing, the sourcing purchasing, and the supply chain management departments.

"I did mostly QA-related duties, including performing an internal quality audit," he recounted. "For this, I first had to send out emails, requesting information from colleagues on the audit part."

He also learnt how to do quality audit through the internal quality audit that the Quality System Engineer and he organised. "I learnt how to adapt myself into a work environment and how important it is to ensure quality product for the customer by following procedures and instructions," he said.



**Teh Ai Fern**, Attached to IT Department, Perusahaan Sindi Sdn Bhd, Sungai Petani, Kedah.

In interning with this manufacturing company that deals with swimming products, Teh, 22, benefitted by applying her knowledge of accounting and IT from WOU during her stint.

"When the supervisor gave a job, I had to understand his instructions and do my job well and fast. My learning at WOU helped me with this," she said.

"This is my first time working," she added. "I now know the process, from start to finish, from when the materials come, for what purpose they are used, how they are stored; the whole process from the raw materials to the finished, manufactured swimming products. It is a good experience."

Teh handled things related to purchasing, and assisted the company as they changed their warehouse and purchasing system from the old ledger-form Excel type for recording stock to their new own portal system. "I had to check to make sure the transfer of data from the old to the new system was accurate," she said.

Her work also involved going to the different departments to ask for information on quality control, ISO, and the manufacturing process. Hence, she learnt about various aspects of the QA process.

"I also learnt about organisational culture, that is the culture of the company, their working style, how they prefer to communicate internally for efficient use of time," she said.





**Chang Yi Wen**, *Trainee in Accounting Department, Curas Ltd, Penang.*

As Chang, 22, had only basic knowledge of accounting, the internship gave her the chance to learn necessary accounting skills such as on managing transactions that come under debit and credit. She also learnt about various invoicing, like the pro forma invoice and the tax invoice for GST.

For these, she found that the WOU courses on *Statistics* and *Accounting* very helpful in her work.

"My main tasks were filing and keying in transactions of the company from the ledger into

the different accounts," she said. "My supervisor taught me how to do the various transactions."

"I also helped my supervisor in arranging requisition of stationery for staff, where I put in the order for the stock required and delivered to the staff," she added.

Chang was also able to polish her communication skills as she needed to use English to liaise with colleagues from the different departments. "The internship helped me to relate better to people," she stressed.

**Lim Chip Yap**, *Trainee in Sales Department, EasyParcel, Bayan Baru, Penang.*

Lim, 22, got the opportunity to apply the business knowledge he got from some of the courses at WOU during his tenure with this company, which operates an online courier services booking portal for customers with door-to-door pick-up and delivery of parcels. The valuable experiences he picked up were in areas like behaviour patterns and characteristics of an organisation.

"I learnt about working as a team and as an 'intrapreneur', and not just as a normal employee," he said. "One cannot have a perception 'I just go and work, times up, then I just go back! My lectures at WOU and my work at EasyParcel opened my eyes to this view."

Lim achieved 150% sales target in the first month, and 130% in the second month. "I had put in a lot of

time into attending the daily meetings, preparing for the next day, and equipping myself with the soft skills that I needed, such as in recognising the types of customers we had and how to approach them," he recounted.

He found that at times when any customer approached him regarding a problem that was technical or customer related, he needed to refer to others in his company.

"I learnt that only with cooperation among us to solve problems can we make our customers satisfied," he concluded.

"I also better understand workplace behaviour, work culture and having the right attitude to work," he added.



**Chang Sin Yin**, *Executive trainee in Support Service (under HR), Eco World Development, Penang.*

Besides doing stock and the purchasing order for stationery, Chang also did the booking of travel flight tickets for staff to attend meetings at the company's offices in Subang and Johor, as well as submission of business travel reservation forms.

"I also helped with the planning of events," the 22-year-old said. "The last was the grand opening of Eco World in Penang. The biggest was the Chinese New Year dinner at our sales gallery for over 100 top management staff."

The *Communications Skills* and *Writing Skills* courses as well as the Management related ones at WOU certainly helped her. She even encountered an incident during the planning of the events when the senior manager asked her about the four Ps (price, product, promotion and placement). "Generally whatever I learnt at WOU I applied. There was

a lot of responsibility; it was quite challenging and a good experience," she said.

"My senior manager put me in charge of performance, the stage, and decoration for the Chinese New Year dinner. As we hired outside trainers to help our staff in their performances, I also coordinated the training, the performance schedules, and the schedules of the event night.

"I also helped to compose, design and email out the invitation cards to the CEO, directors, and management. I arranged accommodation, transportation, flight tickets of management staff from our other offices," she elaborated.

Overall, she learnt how to plan and organise events, how to communicate and deal with people, which is important in HR field, and how to talk to the top bosses.



## New MBA in collaboration with global logistics giant

WOU has entered into an academic collaboration with Li & Fung, a global supply chain manager, to offer an industry-relevant MBA in Logistics & Supply Chain Management to adult learners through open distance learning (ODL).

The arrangement is the latest in a series of joint efforts between the University and local as well as overseas partners, whereby WOU works with leading companies in their respective fields to help fulfil its obligation to produce employable graduates.

Li & Fung is a multinational establishment based in Hong Kong that specialises in consumer goods sourcing and logistics management.

"The engagement with Li & Fung is to develop curriculum for the new MBA that minimises the gap between academia and business," said Chong Fook Suan, Senior Lecturer at WOU's School of Business & Administration. Chong has 30 years' experience in logistics and freight transport, and currently oversees WOU's undergraduate courses on warehouse, freight transport and logistics management.

"This will enable WOU's academic programme to produce graduates who can meet the contemporary and future needs of businesses," he added.

WOU has already hosted two visits by key members of Li & Fung's management team. The first was by Dr William Fung Kwok Lun, Group Chairman, on 15 September 2014, and the second by Joseph Phi, President of LF Logistics, on 5 May 2015.

"Mr Phi's involvement is critical as he advises WOU on the current state of affairs in the logistics business world. As president of a leading international logistics company, he has the vast experience and foresight of future challenges," said Chong.

Both WOU and Li & Fung regard competency in logistics and supply chain management as giving companies the vital competitive edge in today's increasingly globalised trade.



Joseph Phi (suit) receives the Homestead coffee table book from Prof Ho.



Chong excited over the new MBA collaboration.



Meeting between WOU and INCEIF last year.

## Islamic Finance electives for CeMBA programme



Lecturer Ravindran of SBA.

WOU students pursuing the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) through open distance learning (ODL) will be able to opt for three elective courses in Islamic Finance (IF), starting from the January 2016 semester.

This comes in the wake of WOU entering into an academic collaboration with the International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance (INCEIF), Kuala Lumpur, for the offering of courses on *Islamic Banking Practices*, *Islamic Capital Market* and *Risk Management & Islamic Financial Institutions*.

This agreement between WOU and INCEIF was signed by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and the President and CEO of INCEIF, Daud Vicary Abdullah, recently. WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-ODL) Prof Madhulika Kaushik and INCEIF's Dean of Professional Studies Ezamshah Ismail were present as witnesses.

WOU lecturer and IF course coordinator Ravindran Raman said each course would entail 10 hours of online tutorials conducted by academics from INCEIF through WOU's learning management system and IT support.

"Acquiring a basic knowledge of Islamic finance will surely benefit our CeMBA students if we consider the incredible growth and acceptance of the Islamic financial system in our country," Ravindran said. "There are many new established Islamic Banks which offer various Islamic banking products and services that run parallel with conventional banks. These products and services are utilised by both Muslim and non Muslim customers."

*Islamic Banking Practices* focuses on Shariah principles in Islamic banking and Islamic banking operations, legal and regulatory aspects of Islamic banking, recent developments, products and services offered by Islamic banks, and how Islamic banking institutions are managed to stay viable and profitable.

*Islamic Capital Market* covers the infrastructure, components and instruments of ICM as well as the underlying Shariah principles applied. *Risk Management and Islamic Financial Institutions* teach about the fundamentals of risk and their management in Islamic financial institutions, including formulating Shariah compliance measures to mitigate risks.

## Inaugural MOOCs see sizeable international participation

Over 400 participants from several countries underwent the two inaugural Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered at WOU from February to May this year.

Of these, a total of 368 registered for the course on Action Research (AR) which was created with a grant from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada. They hailed mostly from Malaysia, the Philippines, India, Ireland, Canada, Trinidad & Tobago, Zambia, Uganda, Namibia and Lesotho.

The course is meant to guide participants through their action research process, including data collection and data analysis, and preparing an action research proposal. It contained four modules - Understanding Action Research, Starting Action Research, Planning the Action, and Writing an Action Research Proposal and Report.

The AR project team comprised Prof Mohandas Menon, Prof Santhiram Raman, Associate Prof Dr Goh Lay Huah and Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi.

Dr Goh said participants were generally happy with the learning experience gained. "We received a few enquiries and requests to participate in our next offering of this MOOC," she said.

The MOOC on Open Educational Resources (OER) saw 66 participants enrolled from Malaysia, Philippines, India, Mongolia, South Africa, Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad & Tobago. This course, sponsored by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), aimed to promote the use of OER in educational institutions.

The five modules for this course - Concept and Practices of Open Education, Licensing and Copyright, Searching and Evaluation of OER Materials, Designing Learning Experiences using OER, and Integrating OER in eLearning - were uploaded onto the learning management system where activities and assignments were undertaken.

The OER project team included Prof Mohandas Menon, Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi, Jasmine Emmanuel, Deebanji Lakshmayya, Dr S Vighnarajah, Dr Ooi Chia Yi, Prakash V Arumugam, Marnisya Rahim and Kang Shing Lee.



*Assoc Prof Dr Goh Lay Huah.*



*Prof Phalachandra updates on the OER course.*

## Insights on designing exams for optimum learning assessment

In order to ensure its examinations are well-structured and suited for optimum assessment of learning outcomes, WOU regularly holds in-house training sessions for new academics on designing exam papers.

A half-day workshop on *Exam Paper Preparation* on 1 April 2015 gave academics some useful feedback on assessment processes and systems. It provided insights and pointers on the role of exams in assessing learning, on norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced testing, and on developing questions to assess different cognitive levels.

The event was facilitated by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon and Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi from the School of Education, Languages and Communications.

Prof Menon highlighted the importance of teaching based on the expected learning outcomes of a course, with learning materials and tutorial support helping to achieve these. The learning tools used by WOU to measure the outcomes are tutor-marked assessments (TMAs) and semester-end final examinations.

"TMAs, quizzes, unit tests and short projects are examples of formative assessment aimed at improving learning, while summative assessment like semester-end examinations and final projects serve to document student learning for transcripts, employers and other external audiences," he explained.



*Hands-on exercise for the academics.*

WOU uses criterion-referenced testing which measures how a student performs against the expected learning outcome rather than in comparison with another student. This helps to eliminate competition and improve cooperation among students, he added.

Prof Phalachandra shed light on a list of action verbs - such as 'define', 'discuss', 'describe', 'explain', 'identify' and 'critically examine' - that are used in examination questions to operationalise learning outcomes. He also offered advice on setting of questions. "Be brief and simple. Avoid unnecessary jargons, two action verbs in a question; if required, split into two questions."

"Each question must relate to only one course learning outcome," he added. "The marks set must match the level of complexity of the question and time required to write the answer. There must be clarity in what is expected from the questions and in the marks distribution."

The participants were also given the opportunity to critically analyse examination questions from previous years, detecting flaws like vague, inappropriate marks distribution and inappropriate use of action verbs.

## New Deputy Dean for SBA

The School of Business and Administration (SBA) has a new deputy dean in Prakash V Arumugam, an educator with over 25 years of experience who assumed the post on 1 February 2015.

Prakash joined WOU as a lecturer on 17 December 2007, helping to develop several courses for the Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) programme. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in January 2010, and appointed the following year to sit in the International Academic Board of CeMBA/PA Programme of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada.

He holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree majoring in Economics that he obtained as a distance learning student while working in Taiping and studying at the then Centre of Off-Campus Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

It was this experience that spurred him to join WOU to provide the kind of support distance learners need but often lack. He then proceeded to complete two Masters' degrees - in Public Administration and Economics - at USM.

Prakash has given a number of talks over the years, including on public administration and politics for the *Teh Tarik* forum held at the Penang Gerakan office. He regularly presents papers on issues concerning adult

learning at the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) Annual Conference and in other forums. He has also been interviewed by Radio-TV Malaysia (RTM) on issues of local interest.

He is presently a doctoral candidate at University of Malaya. His primary research interest is in student support and retention studies of adult learners. He is also conducting research in the area of East Asian foreign direct investment.



Prakash readily shares his personal philosophy:

*"Knowledge in whatever form should never be underestimated. To say that certain knowledge is useless is to undermine its value. The true value of knowledge is knowing when and how to use it."*



Dean of SST, Assoc Prof Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei, welcomes Dr Lee to WOU.

## WOU welcomes accomplished inventor and academic as Associate Professor

The School of Science and Technology of WOU has a new Associate Professor with the appointment of Dr Lee Chee Leong, 40, on 18 May 2015. Accomplished as a co-inventor, engineer and academic, Dr Lee's fields of teaching are semiconductor, microelectronics, electro-magnetics, and mathematics in engineering and science.

Prior to this appointment, he served as Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Physical and Mathematical Science at UTAR for about five years. He had also previously worked for almost two years as an LED fabrication process engineer at Agilent Technologies, Singapore.

Dr Lee has participated as a co-inventor on a patent entitled *Plasma Etching of Diamond Surfaces* which was licensed to a UK diamond company. The patent was filed in Great Britain in 2008 and subsequently in the US, Africa, Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands and other countries by the leading diamond firm.

His early education is rooted in Penang, having studied at Chung Ling High School before earning his BSc (Hons) degree in Physics from Universiti Sains Malaysia. He then gained a Master of Engineering in

Electrical and Electronics Engineering from the National University of Singapore.

His PhD at Strathclyde University in the UK was fully sponsored by the Department of Trade & Industry, UK.

Dr Lee considers his five main research interests to be:

- Diamond field-effect transistor or other semiconductor materials
- Micro or nano optical devices
- Photonics and photovoltaic devices
- MEMS or NEMS devices
- Sensing devices

On his personal philosophy, Dr Lee shares the driving motto of his life: *'Dominus illuminatio mea'* which means 'The Lord is the source of my enlightenment'.



*Dato' Mah (centre) assures his party's support to WOU.*

## Gerakan president pledges support for educational excellence at WOU

The President of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, Dato' Mah Siew Keong, has pledged the party's continued commitment to the University which has meteorically risen as one of the most reputable and popular learning institutions for adults nearly a decade after being established in 2006.

"We want academic excellence and for WOU to be at the forefront of quality education. Gerakan will work closely with WOU and ensure that WOU remains a leading educational institution," said Dato' Mah during his first visit to the University as the party's President.

Dato' Mah, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, was apprised of the University's operations, progress and challenges during the visit to the main campus on 14 April 2015. He led a delegation of some twenty party leaders, including vice presidents Datuk A Kohilan Pillay, Datuk Dr Asharuddin Ahmad, Datuk Dr Dominic Lau Hoe Chai and Dato' Tan Lian Hoe.

Among those welcoming them was Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who had been instrumental in setting up the University during his previous tenures as Gerakan president and Penang Chief Minister.

WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, were also on hand to receive the delegation, along with Board members and the University's top management.

In briefing the delegates, Prof Ho shared the vision and progress towards balancing academic standing with financial sustainability. He explained the University's goal to achieve break-even point by 2017. To achieve this, WOU is proactively pushing forward with a few strategic actions, such as partnering offshore education institutions through programme franchises and joint degree arrangements, and licensing course materials to overseas institutions.

"We want to increase income through student numbers and reduce expenses through prudence and efficient management on all fronts," he said.

## Eyeing academic collaboration with Fern Universität of Germany



*Exploring potential mutual exploration at meeting.*

WOU has begun exploring an academic collaboration with Germany's largest university, possibly for joint research projects as well as a new Master's programme.

The matter was deliberated when WOU played host to Prof Herwig Unger, Chair of the Department of Communication Networks of Fern Universität (FernUni) in Hagen, Germany, at the main campus on 21 July 2015.

Prof Unger, a computer scientist, was accompanied by his wife, Dr Panchalee Sukjit, who is in the university's Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science. They held meetings with the WOU senior management, including Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and Dean of School of Science & Technology (SST), Associate Prof Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei.

FernUni is Germany's largest education institution with over 90,000 students. It is also the only state-maintained distance learning university serving German-speaking countries and regions in Europe. Established in 1974 and fully financed by the German government, it offers free tertiary education. Its Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes are offered entirely on part-time mode.

WOU and FernUni have identified topics for joint research projects and would be applying for research funding from appropriate organisations like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which provides funding to develop bi-national study courses. Another collaboration that was explored was the joint development and offer of courses in English for a Master's programme.

Prof Unger also delivered a public talk on a research being conducted by his Department titled *Fully decentralised search engines: just a dream?* It involves new approaches towards moving away from big centralised web search engines like Google.

He introduced the DocAnalyser, an open source software to manage information in the Internet, which FernUni aims to launch in October. DocAnalyser enables users to find web documents based on automatic query formulation and state-of-the-art search word extraction, he said.

Among those attending the talk were WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Prof Ho and academics and students from WOU, KDU, UTAR and USM.

## UEC achiever picks WOU for full-time study

When Ng Xin Pei from Bukit Mertajam got news that she has received a 40% rebate from WOU following her registration for full-time study in the recent May intake, it brought deserved relief for the student who has shone in her academic work.

The 19-year-old had obtained 7As in her UEC at Jit Sin Independent High School last year. Her success in gaining the financial assistance reflects the worthy support being given by WOU to students who excel in their STPM/UEC examinations.

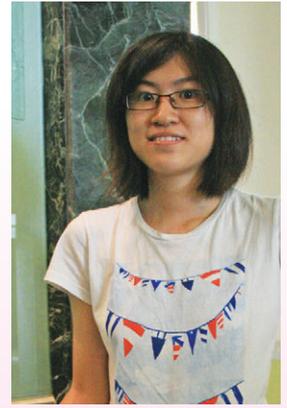
In fact, there is an increasing trend for students like Xin Pei who achieved STPM or UEC qualifications to turn to WOU for a first degree. This is largely due to the WOU Bursary Award that offers substantial rebates, including 100% waiver of total tuition fee, based on their entry qualifications.

Xin Pei, who is pursuing Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting, is grateful for the WOU Bursary Award as "it will help relieve some of the financial burden of my parents on my studies".

She aspires to become an accountant, having developed an interest and liking for the subject during her upper secondary school days.

Incidentally, Xin Pei is not the first in her family to enter WOU; her elder sister, Xin Rou, 26, is studying part-time for her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Liberal Studies degree at the University.

"I was persuaded to consider WOU for my higher education by my mum, a teacher at SMJK Jit Sin, and my sister who is already a student here," said Xin Pei, who is the youngest of four children and whose father works as assistant marketing manager with an automobile company in Butterworth.



## 'Have WOU degree will climb corporate ladder'



The abiding desire to perform well in her job and ascend in her professional career led sales executive Amanda Fong Kim Yen, 22, from Ipoh, to register for part-time study at WOU in the January 2015 intake.

Armed with an SPM certificate from Methodist Girls School and job experience of two years, she enrolled for the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales & Marketing programme at WOU via Open Entry.

Amanda, who works with a distribution company dealing in building products and construction materials, views her studies towards the degree to be important for "self-improvement" and as "a stepping stone to climb the corporate ladder".

"The Sales and Marketing degree will complement my work experience and enable me to face the challenges ahead in my career," she said.

True to its ideal, WOU has responded favourably in facilitating her aspirations. Amanda is a happy recipient of the WEF (Wawasan Education Foundation) Study Grant, a one-off financial aid which will subsidise her first semester studies. In addition to that she received the Return to Study Allowance (RTSA) provided to all new students.

Amanda finds the open distance learning (ODL) mode of study at WOU to be convenient, flexible and affordable for working adults like her. "I can study at my own pace, time and schedule," she stressed.

Her career goal is to utilise the WOU degree to build up her professional profile, and ultimately scale herself up to the top of her profession, perhaps even becoming an entrepreneur one day.

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