

Malaysia's Constitution at the crossroads

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Critical insights on state of the law in the nation

Malaysia's esteemed and all-important Federal Constitution is in a state of flux and undergoing "very silent, unwritten changes". This was among some deep insights shared by Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi, one of the country's leading constitutional experts, during a public talk on the current state of law in the nation.

From surreptitious changes in legislations to questionable insertions of clauses to poorly drafted laws, the problems that beset the nation's constitutional and legal scenario demand that the law be accorded proper procedural treatment, he stressed. The Constitution is not a permanent document and therefore it can change. "But this must be done openly. It must be done according to procedures," he said.

Prof Faruqi, the Senior Professor of Law and Legal Advisor in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, said this in a public lecture on *The Constitution At A Crossroad* at the main campus on 10 September 2016. The event was organised by WOU's Centre for Dialogue (C4D) under its Chancellor's Lecture Series.

He emphasised that unlike most democracies Malaysia also suffers from a wide area of "non-justiciability" where judges assign cases as a political, economic or policy issue and let the Minister to decide rather than intervene. He cited as an example the ban on the Aliran Monthly magazine to print in Bahasa Malaysia where the judges converted a case pertaining to a constitutional issue into one of administrative law by declaring that under the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Minister has discretion.

He also pointed to the Attorney-General's office amending Article 12(4) of the Federal Constitution to translate parent/guardian from "ibubapa" to "ibu atau bapa", thereby allowing one parent to

convert a child under 18. "So these surreptitious changes are what trouble me as a student of constitutional law," he said.

And in 1988, Article 121(1A) was inserted into the Constitution forbidding civil courts from interfering in any matter "within the jurisdiction of the syariah courts," he added. He explained that the amendment was badly drafted because it does not say who determines the jurisdiction of the syariah court, leading syariah judges to interpret their jurisdiction expansively while civil courts interpret theirs narrowly.

"And many areas clearly in federal hands are being determined by the syariah court," he stressed. He elaborated that syariah courts existed under state law and have jurisdiction only over Muslims. "Since the late 1980s, however, there is civil society pressure to move in the direction of an Islamic state with supremacy of the syariah as the cardinal principle."

Prof Faruqi also observed the reluctance of superior courts to exercise their power to nullify federal and state legislation when there was inconsistency with the constitution.

The courts however have done their job in censuring executive abuse of power, he stressed. For example, the Court of Appeal censured the Home Minister for declaring it illegal for protesters to wear yellow t-shirts.

He expressed concern over the alarming development of court decisions not being implemented by some executive authorities, like the custody order for a mother or concerning peaceful assembly. He said although the Court of Appeal had declared Section 9(5) of the Peaceful Assembly Act unconstitutional and pending appeal by the Attorney-General, the executive authorities were still using this section. "Legally that's wrong," he said.

He added that freedom of speech is the least protected right, having 14 grounds for Parliament to impose restrictions. These include order, security, incitement and defamation.

cont. page 2

Prof Faruqi delivers an interesting lecture.

2 Vice Chancellor's VOICE

WOU has expanded and developed since its inception in 2006. We have lined up some interesting events, special fee promotions, and attractive souvenirs to mark our 10th anniversary and thank all stakeholders for their support.

Moving on, I want to at the outset congratulate our part-time and full-time students who have successfully completed their studies and will be convocating in November this year. I wish you success in your careers and in life. I trust that as alumni of WOU you will continue to act as good ambassadors of the University.

I also applaud the Centre for Dialogue for organising the very appropriately themed public lecture that discussed the spirit of the original Constitution of Malaysia. Indeed, the lecture was very eloquently delivered by Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi. As good citizens, all of us need to know and understand the Constitution of our beloved country well.

Two delegations, one from Panyathip International School of Lao PDR and another from the National Open University of Nigeria, visited WOU in the month of June. It is a normal practice for WOU to share its experiences in the areas of distance education, quality assurance and learning support with any academic institution, be it local or from overseas. We view such visits as opportunities for WOU to forge smart strategic partnerships with the institutions to pursue various forms of academic collaboration.

Next, I am delighted to mention that WOU was officially recommended by the Ministry of Higher Education to represent Malaysia in the Asean Cyber University (ACU) Project. The purpose of the ACU Project, which is anchored by the Republic of Korea (a partner of ASEAN), is to promote e-learning and the sharing of such experiences among ASEAN universities with the hope that the resultant interactions will contribute to a more coordinated development of open educational resources for use in higher education in ASEAN member states.

On the research front, one of our lecturers is leading a project on radio telescope technology while another researcher has put the University in the limelight through her winning of the Best Paper Award at an international conference on qualitative research.

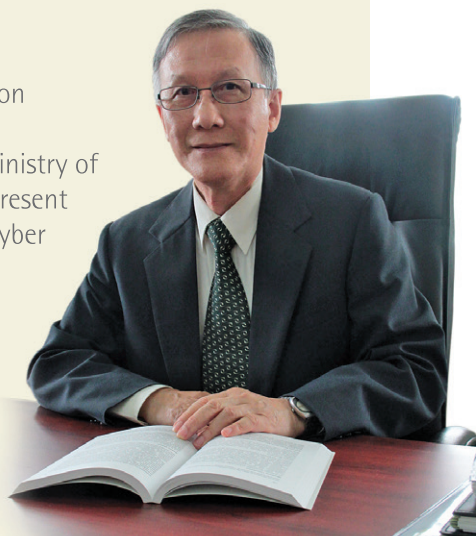
Another notable change this year is the renaming of the School of Foundation & Liberal Studies to the School of Humanities & Social Sciences. This move is to mainstream and align the current and future directions of the School in terms of the academic programmes it offers now and in time to come.

Our commitment to corporate social responsibility is further reaffirmed through our continued support and recent participation in the Relay for Life Penang in July.

A number of other interesting events were also organised in the past several months. They include the full-time students' ice-breaking games session, the special Hari Raya Aidilfitri luncheon and the joint WOU-DISTED Family Day. All these and more have contributed to the joie de vivre, camaraderie and spirit of belonging that are part and parcel of the rich and memorable experience that members of the WOU community will gain.

“ I am delighted to mention that WOU was officially recommended by the Ministry of Higher Education to represent Malaysia in the Asean Cyber University Project. ”

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



Prof Faruqi responds to questions. At left is Dr Ooi.

cont. from cover page

Prof Faruqi also highlighted that affirmative action policies were written into the Federal Constitution in only four areas – appointments in the public services; issuing of government permit and licences; post-secondary education facilities and scholarships; and exhibitions and such facilities. In practice, however, such policies were applied across the board, he remarked.

He also questioned whether constitutional bodies created to enforce accountability such as the Attorney-General Chambers, Auditor General or Police Commission have been doing necessary check and balance.

Prof Faruqi pointed out that the Constitution in its original forms in 1957 and 1963 was one of moderation, compassion and compromise but it is now being undermined by surreptitious amendments from politicalisation of institutions and disregard for the spirit of the law.

For instance, “a conservative, obscurantist and aggressive version of Islam from the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, is replacing the tolerance and compassion that were the hallmark of Malay society and the Malay archipelago,” he said.

“The increasing ‘Arabisation’ of Malay society and the subordination of the Constitution to religious oligarchies are undermining the Constitution and impacting negatively on the rights of Muslims and non-Muslims,” he stressed. “There is a very strong oligarchy that is undermining the constitution.”

He wondered if Malaysia was moving towards a Saudi version of an Islamic state. “Are we going to have one-country-two-systems – two systems of laws and two systems of courts for the Muslims and non-Muslims?” he asked. He believed time will tell the shape of things to come.

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Momentous Milestones of Wawasan Open University

On September 22nd this year, WOU marked the 10th anniversary of its historic inception. The institution was founded from a vision for a non-profit virtual university that the then president of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik, presented to his party's delegates in July 1999. Lim passed away in 2012.

The Gerakan Education Foundation was set up in March 2000 as a tax-exempt charitable foundation, and renamed Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) in 2002. The foundation received substantial donation from the family of the late Yeap Chor Ee, a prominent Penang-based tycoon and philanthropist.

In June 2002, eight experts in open and distance learning were commissioned to prepare a detailed proposal for the establishment of an Open and Virtual University of Malaysia. In July 2003, Yeap Chor Ee's grandson, Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, announced that 'Homestead', the Yeap heritage family home on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, would be donated to serve as the main campus of the proposed virtual university.

Further chronology of significant events:

JUL 2005	Wawasan Open University College (WOUC) is officially established, with Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan appointed as Vice Chancellor.	OCT 2010	WOU holds the inaugural Convocation for the pioneer batch of CeMBA graduates.
JAN 2006	A ground-breaking ceremony is held for the development of a new 12-storey tower behind the Homestead mansion.	NOV 2010	Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu passes away.
JUN 2006	WOUC is formally registered.	NOV 2011	Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik is formally installed as Chancellor, and the second Convocation Ceremony is held.
JUL 2006	WOUC is granted university status by MOHE and becomes 'Wawasan Open University' (WOU).	OCT 2012	Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye succeeds Prof Dato' Dr Wong Tat Meng as Vice Chancellor and CEO of WOU.
AUG 2006	WOU officially established and registered.	NOV 2012	Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon is proclaimed Pro-Chancellor of WOU and the third Convocation Ceremony is held.
SEP 2006	WOU is officially launched by then Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Seri Mustapa Mohamed.	DEC 2012	Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik passes away.
NOV 2007	A bronze statue of Yeap Chor Ee is unveiled near the frontispiece of the Homestead building.	SEP 2013	Full-time degree programmes commence at the main campus in Penang.
JAN 2008	The main campus is officially launched by then Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.	DEC 2013	Tun Mohamed Dzaiddin Abdullah is installed as Chancellor and the fourth Convocation Ceremony is held.
NOV 2008	Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu is officially installed as WOU's first Chancellor. He confers the University's first ever Honorary Degrees at a special convocation that follows.	NOV 2014 & NOV 2015	Fifth Convocation and Sixth Convocation ceremonies are held.
DEC 2009	Prof Wong Tat Meng succeeds Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan as Vice Chancellor and CEO of WOU.		



The main campus under construction in November 2006.



Launching of the main campus on 19 January 2008 by then Prime Minister.

New Dean of SBA

WOU is pleased to welcome Associate Prof Dr Intan Osman as the new Dean of the School of Business & Administration (SBA), having assumed her responsibilities on 15 August 2016.

Prior to joining WOU, she had served as Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business and Information Science, UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur in 2015.

Dr Intan began her career as an academician at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in late 1978. She then took a career break to join the corporate sector as training manager in executive development programmes for two multinational companies, and as management trainer at a local training firm and Malaysian professional bodies.

She re-entered USM in 1994, and was promoted to Associate Professor in the School of Management in 2002, where she taught a few courses at the undergraduate, masters (MBA) and doctorate (DBA) levels. She also gave consultations in human resources issues while developing and training practitioners from the corporate and government sectors in effective organisation and management.

From 2009 to 2014, Dr Intan joined the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) in USM as academic researcher and coordinator.

She has headed several research projects, including a Ministry of Higher Education funded research

on *Women's Innovativeness using Gender Analysis Framework*, and others like *Empowering Single Women in Entrepreneurship* and *Women in Eco-tourism*. She also researched gender-oriented projects including those on domestic violence, health and lifestyle, microcredit, leadership and employment. With WOU, she wrote a module on HRM and served as module assessor.

At the international level, she was a tutor and an adult education course leader at University of Stirling, Scotland. She also served as a visiting lecturer/scholar at Tashkent Technical College in Uzbekistan, Northern Sumatra University in Indonesia, University of Lethbridge in Canada, and at Nihon Fukushi University and Nanzan University in Japan. During the fall semester of 2013, she was the Visiting Chair of the Burns Endowment Fund Programme, Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge.

Dr Intan obtained a Diploma in Banking from Institute Teknologi MARA (now UiTM), Shah Alam, a BSc (Business Administration) from Indiana State University, USA, an MBA from Central Missouri State University, USA, and her DBA from Newport University, USA.

She has participated in several international conferences within Malaysia and overseas on a wide range of topics, including organisational behaviour, women's entrepreneurship, women and health, and human resources competencies.

She was bestowed an Ahli Mahkota Perlis (AMP) award by the Raja of Perlis at a special ceremony in Arau on 8 September 2016 for her academic and social contribution to the development of the State.



Loh speaks on financial planning.



"Build up savings and plan for financial freedom"

A professional consultant on personal finance has advised Malaysians to adopt a "savings first" mentality and use only their remaining incomes for expenses and payments.

Loh Pei Luan, an associate with Amanah Saham Nasional Berhad (ASNB) Penang, spoke in a talk recently on the need for proper management of finances to fulfil goals like buying a house, supporting children's education and having a comfortable retirement.

"Identify your priorities, and short-term and long-term financial objectives," she said. "Plan how much to save and allocate that amount." She warned that financial deficits can lead to borrowing and debt, reduced living standards, increased use of credit card, stress and bankruptcy. Knowing how to differentiate between needs and wants will help control debts.

Loh said this in her talk on *Personal Financial Planning* organised by WOU's School of Business & Administration at the main campus on 29 July 2016.

She pointed to statistics that show less than 50% of Malaysians settling their credit card amounts every month - compared to 89% in Taiwan and 87% in Japan - and so incur high interest rates. Also, one in five Malaysians does not have monthly savings, and 93% of Malaysians do not have any planning.

She noted a few common mistakes in financial planning. These include the failure to set targets or goals and ways to achieve them; lack of discipline to save systematically; inadequate insurance coverage; refusal to use certified financial advisors; and failure to deal with inflation.

Loh presented seven steps to achieve financial freedom. "Firstly, know your current financial position, your assets (e.g. house, property, savings), liabilities (e.g. car loan balance, credit card loans), and net cash flow (take-home income minus expenditure e.g. loan instalments, petrol, toll, food, housing)."

"Secondly, set your financial goal, such as clearing debts within a year. Thirdly, have an action plan, like using credit cards less or postpone buying a car. Next, keep records, namely receipts, cheque butts, and credit card statements to identify and monitor your cash outflow," she said.

"Then prepare a budget based on income and expenditure, remembering to allocate for savings/investment. Sixth, control and settle debts smartly, by cutting down on unnecessary expenses and paying off debts/loans with high interests first. Finally, monitor all spending so that you can eliminate items not needed, and make up on savings the following month."

Touching on investments, Loh said low to moderate risk takers may prefer fixed deposits or unit trusts, highlighting that the inflation rate in Malaysia is 4% while fixed deposit savings offer 3% interest compared to ASNB's 5% to 9%.

Asean referencing opens graduates' doors to the region

Graduates of tertiary institutions in Malaysia accredited by the government will soon enjoy greater opportunities to pursue further higher education and employment in other Southeast Asian countries.

This is because the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) will be referenced to the Asean Qualifications Reference Framework next year. The move will enable graduates from relevant institutions in Malaysia to gain fresh mobility across the region as their degrees and certifications gain enhanced recognition among Asean nations.

Prof Hazman Shah Abdullah, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (QA) of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) made the disclosure on the move towards the Asean referencing in his lecture on *Quality Assuring Higher Education in the New Millennium* organised by WOU at the main campus on 15 July 2016. The MQA is the federal agency responsible for quality assurance of higher education for both the public and the private sectors.

In his presentation, Prof Hazman said there are many emerging challenges related to the accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes. He said these are not only causing stress in institutions of higher learning but also within the MQA.

He said should any accredited institution fail to deliver on its promises to students, MQA's accountability will be brought into question. He noted cases in US and Europe where colleges along with the accrediting agencies are facing lawsuits from students when colleges do not provide the required support.

He also said that from next year onwards MQA will make overseas visits to audit Malaysian institutions' accredited awards delivered in other countries, whether these are by partnership, franchise or any other arrangement.

Prof Hazman took to task colleges in Malaysia that have poor record-keeping of graduates and do not keep track of where they are employed. He said higher education providers should give serious attention to

graduates, especially their employability. MQA monitors how effectively the education provider engages industry for feedback on the study curriculum so as to improve the teaching and learning experience of students, he stressed.

He also shared on MQA's reinforcement division which actively monitors websites, information in the mass media, blogs, advertisements and claims of accreditation. He remarked that since last October, there have been many more rejections for provisional and full accreditations due to serious issues concerning teaching and assessment.

Prof Hazman lamented that although QA performance can vary among institutions, from very good to mediocre, yet all are lumped together as "accredited". He said he prefers a system that accords varying degrees of accreditation as this will provide a strong incentive for institutions to improve.

Some 150 academics and administrators attended the lecture, including WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan and Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye. Also in the crowd were representatives of AIMST University, Penang Medical College, Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Ipoh and INTI International College.



Prof Hazman.



Jonathan Yap.

Four facets of leadership agility for added value

Every organisation aspires to be successful, especially in this age of information revolution where industries face ever-changing technologies and business environments. In this regard, there is one key attribute for an organisation to observe in bringing the best out of its staff, in accommodating stakeholders' views and in enhancing customer experience.

It is that the leadership must ensure it is agile. "Leadership agility is about being nimble, proactive, accountable, adaptable to changes, and able to make things happen," said Jonathan Yap, Executive Director, Group Internal Audit, DBS Bank, Singapore, in a talk organised by WOU's School of Business & Administration at the main campus on 11 June 2016.

"The ability to be agile is also linked to emotional intelligence (EQ), which enables you to understand people and react or adapt to their

thinking." He mentioned changing industry landscapes and the growth of non-financial services like Facebook, Uber, Alibaba and Airbnb which are innovatively expanding and enriching customer experience.

He listed the four components of leadership agility - self-leadership agility, stakeholder agility, creative agility and context-setting agility.

Self-leadership agility is the ability to secure, solicit and use wisely feedbacks given. "You need to act on the feedbacks generated," he explained. "If you have a staff leaving your workplace, in order to improve the situation you need to understand why he/she is leaving. Oftentimes you have exit interviews, but no action taken."

Stakeholder agility involves building connectivity with external stakeholders, such as suppliers and distributors. "Their objectives and thought process are going to be different from yours. To be agile, you need to absorb their views, priorities and objectives, and respond accordingly."

Creative agility is the ability to be creative and ask questions. Yap warned of "dictator leadership" that tends to instil fear, causing individuals to clam up to avoid getting into trouble. Even though a staff may think he is right, he will not voice it out.

"You feel you can't challenge your superiors, so you pull back, become quiet." He said an insightful, creative leader questions underlying assumptions and is focused on strategic outcomes.

Context-setting agility is the ability to focus on the vast number of happenings around us, and making sure you have the opportunity to push ideas with awareness and a sense of purpose. "If you sell, you need good marketing skills. If you create a product, you must be able to diversify it to reach out to more consumers," Yap stressed.

About 60 people attended the talk, including Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap.

Consul-general supports cooperation between **WOU** and institutions in China

WOU recently welcomed a visit by China's consul-general for Penang, Mr Wu Jun, and gained support in its bid to explore cooperation with academic institutions in the People's Republic of China.

Wu, who led a five-member group from his office on 15 July 2016, was greeted by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, WOU Sdn Bhd (WOUSB) Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap and Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

They were joined in a meeting by WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Madhulika Kaushik, Chief Operating Officer Yeong Sik Kheong, Registrar Dr Andy Liew, senior academics, along with DISTED College President Dr Seah Soo Aun and Dato' Yeap Beow Chong.



Discussion in progress.



Wu Jun (white shirt) greeted by WOU senior management.

Wu shared that China also has a tertiary institution similar to WOU – the Open University of China based in Beijing. He expressed support for mutual cooperation between institutions of higher learning in China with those like WOU and DISTED in Penang.

In his briefing, Prof Ho spoke on 'WOU and its Higher Education Delivery System'. He explained how WEF and WOUSB are linked to the University. He also highlighted the postgraduate and undergraduate programmes offered and WOU's academic collaborative initiatives overseas.

Prof Ho also spoke about the proposed offering of a Mandarin course by WOU in collaboration with Kong Zi Institute and University of Malaya, and recounted a few visits by Chinese academics to WOU.

Dr Seah gave an explanation on DISTED's academic programmes and other activities like its holiday camps, English courses and cultural exchange programmes. He also spoke on camps that have been held here for locals and students from Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and Papua New Guinea.

He requested for the consul-general's support in drawing more Chinese students to come to Penang, especially to DISTED, for study, exchange programmes and English learning holiday camps.

Wu Jun was appointed consul-general last July. The consulate-general office was officially opened in December, covering the states of Perlis, Perak, Kedah and Penang as its consular district.

Productive visits from Laos and Nigeria in June

The month of June this year saw two institutions – one from Malaysia's Southeast Asian neighbour Laos and the other from the distant west African nation of Nigeria – visiting WOU to gain insights on the successful management of our varsity, and to share their own visions of making higher education accessible in their countries.

On June 2nd, a four-member delegation from the Panyathip International Group of Schools in Laos came to the main campus. The visitors were led by Pathana Panyathip, president and founder/director of the Panyathip Group.

Pathana highlighted the group's plan to set up a private international university in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. To be named the International University of Laos, it is expected to open in August 2018. There is presently only one national university in the country.

The visitors held discussions with WOU vice chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, chief operating officer Yeong Sik Kheong and regional operations director K H Chong.

Founded in 2001 with 38 students and 12 teachers, the Panyathip International School has since expanded to operate three international schools for kindergarten to high school pupils.

The Laos visit was followed by a 10-member delegation from the National Open University of Nigeria's (NOUN) Governing Council on the Regulations of Conditions of Service touring the WOU main campus on June 20th and 21st.



Prof Sogolo (standing) addresses the meeting.



The delegates from Lao PDR (right) meet up with WOU management.

The delegation was led by Council chairman Prof Godwin Sogolo and included Prof Nebath Tanglang and registrar Josephine Akinyemi. The main purpose of their visit was to learn about regulations on services of staff in WOU.

They met Prof Ho, Yeong and other top management staff. They were briefed on the University's operations and given demonstrations of the Student Portal, Learning Management System, Online Assignment Submission System, online re-enrolment system, digital library and the OER Repository.

Gold support for Relay for Life's battle against cancer



Staff, students and family participated for WOU.

For the ninth consecutive year WOU has lent its support to the 'Relay for Life – Fighting Cancer Together' campaign by being the Gold Sponsor of the event in Penang on 23 July 2016.

A 20-member contingent from the University joined more than 2,000 people from all ages and walks of life who participated in Relay for Life Penang 2016 to show solidarity and support for the crusade against cancer.

The team comprising staff and full-time students participated in the traditional walkabout at the Youth Park field, carrying a University banner with the message 'Because Knowledge Saves Lives' and placards. The event was organised by the National Cancer Society of Malaysia Penang Branch and the Penang Hospice Society.

The purpose of the campaign is to help spread four key messages about cancer, which are: that a healthy lifestyle practice reduces the risk of getting cancer; that early detection and proper treatment save lives; that many cancers are treatable; and that you are not alone.

The National Cancer Society of Malaysia Penang Branch initiated the Relay for Life in Malaysia in 2005, after the campaign began as a worldwide movement in the USA. The global Relay for Life aims to spread awareness about the battle against cancer and raise much needed funds for health services related to the ailment. The movement started under the American Cancer Society and is now observed in more than 20 countries with over 4 million participants.

Dr Afif Bahardin, Penang's State Executive Councillor for Agriculture, Agro-based Industries, Rural Development and Health, kicked off the relay by joining cancer survivors in the first lap around the field. Among those who took part in the walkabout were corporate sponsors, organisations, individuals and other supporters.

In his address at the opening of the event, Dr Afif remarked that the strong spirit of the relay will serve to generate public awareness about the dreaded disease. He urged more Penangites to join the Relay for Life campaign, exhorting: "Forward with our fight against cancer!"

Earlier, on July 13th, WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye represented the University at a ceremonial check presentation to the relay's organiser in Komtar.

In the spirit of being a "people's university", and as part of its commitment towards corporate social responsibility, WOU is proud to lend its full support to Relay for Life Penang.



Full-time students lead the walk for WOU.

OCL students bond and "break ice" with games

The WOU main campus was abuzz with laughter and camaraderie recently when the newly-elected On-Campus Learning (OCL) Student Council held its first activity - a round of station games to foster fellowship. Held at the main campus on 10 June 2016, the event featured five exciting games planned with the purpose of "breaking ice" among new students as well as seniors.

"In a few games the students needed to work together and this encouraged teamwork, while others promoted patience, a spirit of adventure, and drawing students out of their comfort zones," said Tay Chin Wen, vice president of the Student Council.

"As our first activity, we chose the ice-breaking games to allow students to get to know their university mates from different classes. With familiarity they will then not be shy to greet when they see one another around campus and become friends." She added that every participant had to introduce themselves during the games.

The event drew participation from 75 students from Years 1 to 3 who clearly had loads of fun as they mingled freely. It also served as a team-building exercise that saw them working in groups to outdo their rivals in the various games. The top three teams were rewarded with food hampers.

Participating students were divided into ten groups, with two groups competing at each station game at one time. Among the items lined up were charades, blowing of ping-pong balls, stacking of hexagon-shaped nuts onto a tower while blind-folded, a three-legged race with partners facing opposite direction, and a treasure hunt.

Kevin Tan Pooi Soo, the WOU lecturer-in-charge of OCL games and recreation, remarked that the games served to "remove any awkwardness or barriers that sometimes exist in formal class settings". He said that



A game of charades.



Huffing and puffing in this ping pong game.



Studying the clues of the treasure hunt.

as the participants got involved in the games, "they began to feel comfortable with one another and this is a good foundation upon which to build and develop relationships".

Overall, the event was a success, with students offering positive reviews to the organising committee. The Student Council plans to organise at least one ice-breaking games activity every year to encourage students to break out of their cliques and mingle while developing their social skills.

School of Humanities and Social Sciences to reflect activities and scope

WOU is now proud to have its own School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) following a change in the name of the School of Foundation and Liberal Studies (SFLS) effective June 30th this year.

The move is in keeping with the School's educational focus and professional outlook. Dr S Nagarajan, Dean of SHSS, explained that "the SFLS has been renamed to better reflect its current activities as well as to provide the scope to introduce new degree programmes in the Social Sciences".

SFLS was itself originally known as the School of Foundation, being one of the first three academic schools set up in 2005 to prepare for the University's launch. Its core functions then were to deliver subjects required by the National Accreditation Board (now Malaysian Qualifications Agency) and compulsory WOU courses for undergraduate degree students.

The School also conducted the Headstart programme designed to equip and prepare students enrolling through the Open Entry admission system with the foundation or knowledge/skills for degree programmes. The SFLS name was adopted when the School introduced the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Liberal Studies programme in June 2007.



Dr Nagarajan.

Dr Nagarajan believes the Foundation programme is no longer relevant as the Ministry of Higher Education has approved Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) to replace Open Entry as a condition for admission into university from 2015.

"Moreover, the number of students taking the Headstart programme has progressively declined. In the last few semesters, no student had enrolled in this programme," he said.

Dr S Nagarajan, Dean of SHSS, shares insights on newly named School

Q: What is the main purpose of the School?

A: The School offers degree programmes designed to widen the horizons and improve the critical thinking skills of its students.

Q: What are the popular programmes offered?

A: The School launched the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Liberal Studies (BALS) programme in January 2009 and the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology (BAPS) programme in the July 2010 semester.

BALS aims to provide life-enhancing and all-rounded education that will help students adapt to changing environments and prepare for a wide variety of career opportunities. It will equip students with communication and interpersonal skills, rational yet critical thinking for problem-solving, and a broad knowledge base to enhance ideas and practices.

This programme offers courses like Introduction to Humanities, Psychology of Creativity, and Entrepreneurship Development, as well as electives from the **Social Sciences** cluster (e.g. Culture, Media and Identities, Managing Stress at Work, Conflict Management, Psychology and the Workplace, Sociology and Society and Human Resource Management) and **Humanities** cluster (e.g. World Religions, World Civilisations, Tourism and Geography, Southeast Asian History and Selection of Asian Literature).

BAPS is designed to provide an introduction to psychology with an emphasis on the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and cultural aspects of human development. Among its courses are Understanding Personality Types, Interpersonal Skills, Biological Psychology, Behaviour Psychology and Psychology of Adult Development.

Q: What are the future plans of the School?

A: The School will soon be offering a Master's degree programme in Psychology and an undergraduate programme in Counselling. The School also proposes to offer degree programmes in other disciplines of the Social Sciences.

It is currently working on the DPP (detailed programme proposal) for an undergraduate degree programme in Mass Communications which is expected to be launched in 2018. In addition, the School's academic members will also be supervising MPhil and PhD candidates in the Social Sciences.

Q: Is there industry input for your programmes?

A: Like the other WOU academic schools, we have set up an **Advisory Peer Group** comprising external academicians along with experts from NGOs and the private/public sector to offer feedback on existing curriculum and new offerings planned.

Q: How many graduates has the School produced to date?

A: In 2014, we produced the inaugural batch of 15 graduates from BALS and 6 from BAPS, which increased to 17 and 15 graduates respectively in 2015. We were delighted that a student from the BALS programme, David Chin Toh Ming of Miri, Sarawak, won the Chancellor's Gold Medal last year for being the top graduate of WOU at the undergraduate level.

We are a small School but I am happy to state that we are growing in terms of the faculty members, students and graduates.



Dr Nagarajan chairs a meeting of his School.

Research by WOU lecturer wins Best Paper Award at conference

WOU took home the 'Best Paper Award' at the 2nd UUM International Qualitative Research Conference (QRC) when senior lecturer Lalitha Ramasamy received accolades for her study on micro-finance.

The research paper by Lalitha was titled *Microfinance for Microenterprise: A Study on Women Petty Traders in Penang, Malaysia*. It examined factors that restrict access of women petty traders to microfinance, and the alternative measures initiated to counter these constraints. (Microfinance is defined as 'a source of financial services for entrepreneurs and small businesses lacking access to banking and related services'.)

The paper also looked at the impact of microfinance on poverty alleviation for women petty traders in Malaysia. The findings showed significant increase in income levels and savings of the petty traders from microfinance, leading to improvement in their overall socio-economic status.

With the official theme 'Qualitative Research: Exploring the Hidden Reality', the QRC 2016 was organised by Tunku Puteri Intan Shafinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). It was held at Penang Parkroyal Resort from 24 to 26 May 2016.

Lalitha, who is attached to WOU's School of Business & Administration, also participated in a workshop titled 'Designing and Publishing Qualitative Research' held in conjunction with the conference. The workshop's objective was to encourage the establishment of qualitative research and provide knowledge to those interested in learning and conceiving the qualitative approach.

"I shall continue my quest of knowledge by carrying out research and studies on women's entrepreneurship activities, especially on the petty traders who have become quite prevalent," she said.

The conference, which attracted some 70 delegates from around the globe, was officiated by UUM Vice-Chancellor Prof Dato' Seri Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak who urged universities to be balanced in terms of learning and research. The aim of the event was to promote and stimulate qualitative research in various disciplines, including business management, education, psychology and law at national and international levels.

The conference offered an ideal platform for networking among qualitative researchers, and for academia to disseminate research findings and qualitative knowledge and skill. It also gave opportunities for industry to initiate collaboration for joint research with higher learning institutions.



Lalitha with her award and workshop participation certificates.

WOU represents Malaysia at ASEAN Cyber University Project



Prof Ho represented WOU at ACU's 2nd Working Group Meeting on Sept 22nd in Seoul, which was convened "to further discuss and implement the set agenda and plans of the ACU Project". The planned activities include: (i) e-learning capacity building; (ii) development and implementation of open contents; (iii) establishment and operations of ACU-OER platform; and (iv) enhancement of ROK-ASEAN cooperative systems.

While in Seoul, Prof Ho also spoke on the *Current Status of the Use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Malaysia* in a specially arranged "OER-MOOC in ASEAN" session at the e-Learning Korea 2016 Conference held at the COEX Exhibition Centre on Sept 21st.

The aim of the 11th edition of e-Learning Korea, with the theme "e-Learning for Smart, Connected World", was to share ROK's accomplishments and experience with the whole world and to further develop relevant industries. It also served to facilitate global exchanges among industries, academic circles, research institutes and public organisations in the field of e-learning.

WOU has been invited by the secretariat of the ASEAN Cyber University (ACU) Project, which is anchored by the Republic of Korea (ROK), to represent Malaysia as a participating university.

WOU's participation in this ACU Project was officially recommended by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education in a letter to the ACU Secretariat on 28 July 2016 signed by the Undersecretary of International Relations Division. The letter asserted that WOU is "a prominent and qualified university" on the basis of its IT capabilities and commendable efforts in providing higher education through e-learning.

"This is indeed an honour for the University," said Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye. "I want to thank our Ministry of Higher Education as well as the ACU Secretariat for their faith in WOU in providing the necessary advisory, collaboration and training in this project."

The purpose of the ACU project is to promote and share e-learning experiences amongst ASEAN universities and contribute towards the further development of higher education institutions in ASEAN member states like Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. It also serves to strengthen relationships between ROK, ASEAN Universities and the ASEAN University Network (AUN).



Prof Ho (left) shares his thoughts.

A radio telescope to **explore cosmic mysteries**

WOU is engaged in a spectacular project to develop a radio telescope – an instrument that receives radio waves from natural extra-terrestrial and artificial satellite sources in outer space. When completed, it will enable the study of phenomena like gas emissions in galaxies like our own Milky Way and thermal radiations from distant celestial realms.

Steered by both academia and industry, the project involves students from secondary schools as well as colleges and universities, thereby helping to heighten their understanding of science and engineering.

The students will gain hands-on learning about the fields of astronomy, astrophysics, spectrography and atmospheric sciences, such as analysis of electromagnetic signals received from space, radio frequency (RF) receiver and optics design, mechanical design, control systems engineering and signal acquisition.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between WOU and Penang Science Cluster (PSC) to formalise the arrangement for the implementation of the venture.

WOU School of Science & Technology (SST) Senior Lecturer Dr Magdalene Goh has been appointed to lead the educational project. "As project lead, I must ensure that both the technical and educational objectives of this project are achieved and we produce a radio telescope at the end," she said.

The project is being helped by academics like Dr Tham Choy Yoong, WOU's former SST Dean, Dr Chong Hon Yew of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Dr Tan Boon Kok of Oxford University. Students from the USM Astronomy Club are also rendering assistance.

This collaboration is supported by industries in Penang through finance, donation of high-end lab instruments and making available of their own engineers to provide technical coaching and mentoring to participants. PSC is acting as the main facilitator.

The project consists of three major parts. Expected to be completed by end of the year, the first part is to build a simple version of a prototype radio telescope using an Astro satellite dish.



Dr Goh (left) oversees the project.

Once the prototype is completed, the project will be broken down to smaller parts for the secondary school pupils to work on. "We will design some simple courses containing syllabi of fundamental engineering principles and science to educate the pupils," she explained. "We want to expose these young people to knowledge of science and engineering and inspire them to become scientists and engineers."

The second part involves building a prototype small radio telescope with a dish that is 5 metres in diameter. This is open to college and university students who can work on it as their final year or internship projects. They will work with supervisors from their institutions while the engineers provide secondary supervision, technical coaching and mentoring.

For the third part, several 5-metre diameter radio telescopes will be duplicated and linked together to form an interferometer, which has higher resolution than a single dish radio telescope. It will be used to map the distribution of the hydrogen emission lines in the Milky Way galaxy, to image the molecular gas distribution of nearby galaxies, and to measure the power spectrum of the cosmic microwave background.

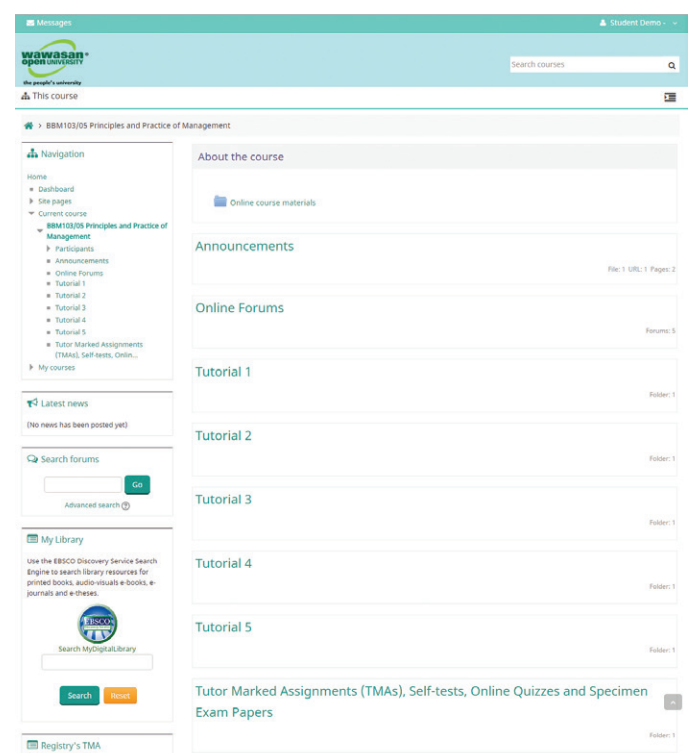
Exciting new *WawasanLearn* features in January

Students will be able to enjoy and benefit from a more user-friendly interface with *WawasanLearn* when the learning management system is upgraded to the Moodle 2.9 e-learning platform. To be activated in January next year, it features easier-to-use navigation and access features for both desktops and mobile devices.

A few of the improvements to expect are:

- Easier navigation and subscription.** You can easily subscribe and navigate between forums and individual discussion pages from the page which displays all forum activities in a course.
- Easier navigation between forum threads.** You can move directly from one discussion to the next discussion in the list without reverting to the online forum page.
- New "My Library" widget.** This widget allows you to access MyDigitalLibrary from the course page.
- Personalised dashboard.** This enables you to track your own activities in the courses that you have enrolled.
- Message button.** It enables you to send messages via a pop-up box without leaving the page you are currently viewing.

WOU has laid out these improved features in *WawasanLearn* to enable students to have an even more pleasant and valuable e-learning experience as they undertake the various courses at the University.





Family Day for 'superheroes' from WOU and DISTED

Looming clouds did not deter some 200 staff and students of WOU and DISTED College from turning up with family members for an enjoyable time at the annual joint Family Day at the Penang Youth Park on 20 August 2016.

The event was organised by WOU this year and was themed 'Superheroes'. It saw an exciting change as the Family Day was held for the very first time outside the premise of either institution. The Youth Park lent a festive, soothing atmosphere to the whole gathering.

Quite a number of participants donned t-shirts of their favourite superhero characters. The entire team from WOU's Educational Technology & Publishing unit came dressed in black t-shirts of Captain America, while others showed off the 'S' of Superman, as well as recognisable logos of well-known comics heroes like Spiderman, Batman and Catwoman.

The event started with a zumba workout session. Among those seen gamely trying to keep in step with the instructor were Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and Chief Operating Officer Yeong Sik Kheong.

Staff enjoying lunch.



Celebrating tradition at Hari Raya luncheon

The hall of the Homestead Mansion in the main campus was a picture of cultural elegance recently as it was festooned with overhanging ketupat wrappings, and its walls decked with ang pow packets and greeting cards. The significance of the occasion was spelt out at the entrance, on a magnificent wooden panel designed by the students, that greeted guests with the wording 'Selamat Hari Raya'.

WOU celebrated Hari Raya Aidilfitri with a sumptuous luncheon at the main campus on 27 July 2016. The event saw full-time students, led by student body President Chow Bai Quan, lending their creativity in decorating the venue.

Every staff received a beautiful ribbon-bound door gift of *kuih bangkit* – or melt-in-mouth cookies – and all tables had plate servings of *lemang*, a Malay delicacy made of glutinous rice and coconut milk, with *serunding*, a tasty savoury side-dish. The celebration began with a fashion show by six students who gamely paraded in striking traditional baju kurung, baju kebaya and baju Melayu.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and Chief Operating Officer Yeong Sik Kheong were then invited to the front to be dressed in *songket sampang*, with some help from Sharizal Inche Mohamed (of

Prof Ho and Paul Seah, head of DISTED's Centre for Continuing Professional Development, launched the event with each releasing a compressed air cylinder that spewed confetti onto the stage.

Next came the colouring contest participated by about 20 children aged 6 to 12 years. Others divided themselves into ten groups to take part in the fun and entertaining games held on the field. One activity called *Super Shake* required participants to shake off ping pong balls from a box tied behind their waist, while another, *Atlantis in Peril*, saw them squeezing water off a dampened cloth into a bottle.

Everyone feasted on a wide spread of delicacies that included spaghetti, *roti jala*, sandwiches, barbeque grilled chicken, fish, corn and vegetables, which were complemented with desserts like cupcakes, mini cheese tarts, cream puff and puddings.

The much anticipated lucky draw saw a total of 58 prizes being given away, including the first prize of a Pensonic Air Fryer, second prize of a rice cooker, third prize in the form of a juice extractor, and many shopping vouchers and goodie bags of varying values.

Among the senior attendees were WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, WOU Head of Human Resources Surayya Shuib and DISTED President Dr Seah Soo Aun.



Kids colouring contest.

Human Resources) and Mohd Yusuf Hanafiah (Library). The baju Melayu is often worn with the sarong-like sampang. It is said that the fabric, colour and manner the cloth is worn provides clues about the stature and state of origin of the wearer.

In his address, Prof Ho stressed that celebrating the main festivals of different ethnic groups is a standard practice in WOU to promote camaraderie among staff, regardless of race or religion.

Taking a cue from the customary Malay supplication of "*maaf zahir dan batin*" (to seek forgiveness in body and spirit), which denotes pardon, reconciliation and renewal of family bonds and friendships, he said: "We should appreciate this. Despite our busy schedule, we should every now and then reflect on our actions and, if necessary, seek forgiveness in a physical way and spiritual way for whatever wrongdoings we might have committed.

"This would bring us back to the heart of viewing each other, not as competitors, but colleagues working together in a peaceful work or even learning environment."

He added: "From a global perspective, we see peace being challenged in many different ways today. I do hope as citizens of the world, we would come to our senses, and commit to making this world a more peaceful place for all to live in."



Door gift of kuih bangkit for everyone.



Yeong (right) and Prof Ho get help in tying the sampang.

The perfect Master's for an aspiring lecturer

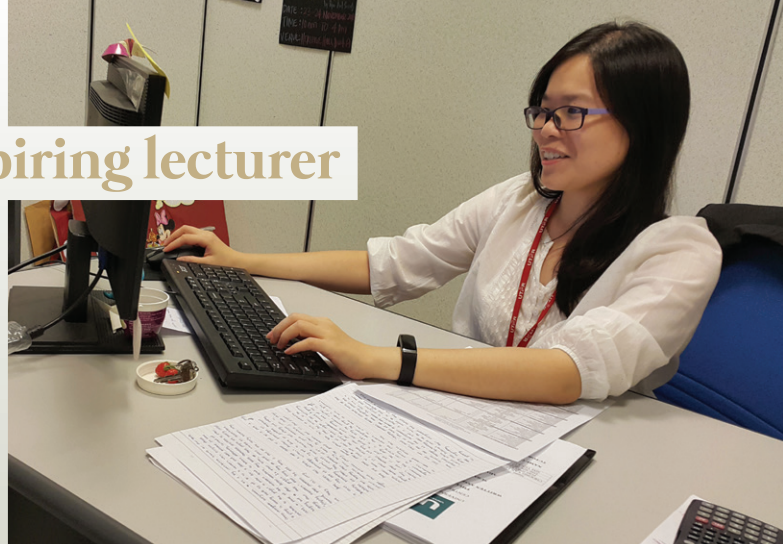
With her heart set on becoming a lecturer, Cynthia Choo Pei Yi from Ipoh decided to pursue a Master of Education with specialisation in Teaching English as a Second Language (Med-TESL) at WOU.

The 27-year-old, who enrolled in the January 2013 intake, chose the University as it is convenient since she needs to only attend one tutorial each month and is able to "stay connected with the tutor" via the learning management system and through phone calls.

"I took up Med-TESL for my professional development and to climb up the career ladder as I want to become a lecturer," she said. "This Master's programme will help improve my teaching skills and give me more confidence in making decisions in work-related matters." On a personal note, she added that her aspiration "is to grow each day to become a better person".

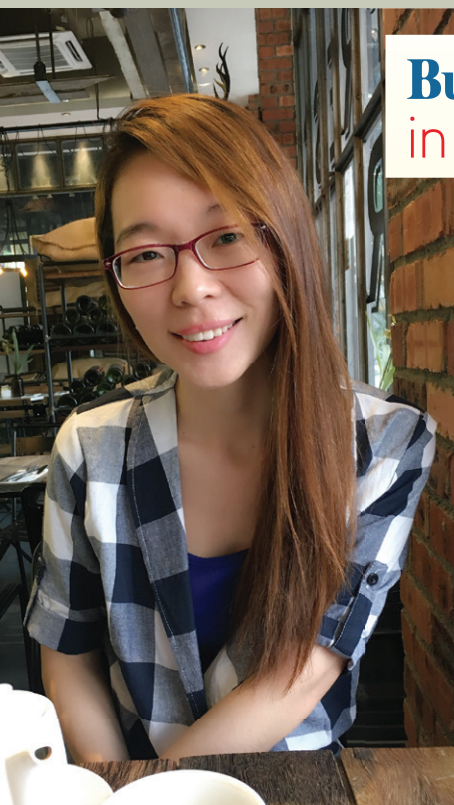
Choo had worked as a teacher at Ipoh International School in 2012 before she joined a private university in Kampar in 2013 as an assistant lecturer in its Centre for Foundation Studies, a position she holds till today. She possesses a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English Language from the same university.

Her current part-time studies at WOU via open distance learning (ODL) have also taught her better time management in terms of how to set her schedule for studying and to be independent.



"Apart from interacting with the tutor or students online whenever we have queries on courses or assignments, I like that I can explore and find information on my own and apply what I learn not only in assignments but also in my job, instead of always expecting to be spoon-fed with information," she added.

She has a gem of encouragement for other working adults intent on advancing themselves: "Just take it easy. Everything comes with a challenge and no doubt it will be difficult at first but once you overcome it, the feeling of satisfaction and achievement that you gain is priceless."



Building a high career in management with WOU

She rose from being a secretary to become a branch manager of a company which supplies building materials. Now Tan Kar Yeng's sights are set even higher and she is hoping that a degree from WOU will propel her further by supplying the necessary building blocks for her career.

The 33-year-old from Batu Gajah, Perak, joined the Ipoh branch of Ju Shun Marketing Sdn Bhd in 2003 as a secretary. She was promoted to branch manager in 2008, and presently manages a team of six workers.

Tan enrolled for Bachelor of Management (Hons) with Psychology at WOU in the July 2016 intake and she now plans to switch to Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management because of her interest in the various aspects of management.

"I want to know how to handle a company, from products to the people," she said. "I want to learn, in a professional way, what business management is all about. I now oversee all the work in the branch, and so I want to learn how to better understand and manage people."

Tan was recommended to join WOU by a friend who has since graduated from the University and had told her of how good the flexible study via open distance learning (ODL) here is. "ODL is so flexible, as there is no fixed time for me to attend lectures. I am able to balance my work and study," Tan said. "I spend like an hour to go through the online learning materials every day. I also join the small study groups to discuss and share."

Tan entered WOU through an APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) evaluation process where her work experience in managing the Ipoh office added value and contributed to her qualifying for entry.

"I wanted to continue my studies while working as I do not have a degree. I hope the degree from WOU will get me promoted to more senior management positions in the company," she said. Tan is keen to rise to the highest level in the field of human resources since she enjoys dealing with people.

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