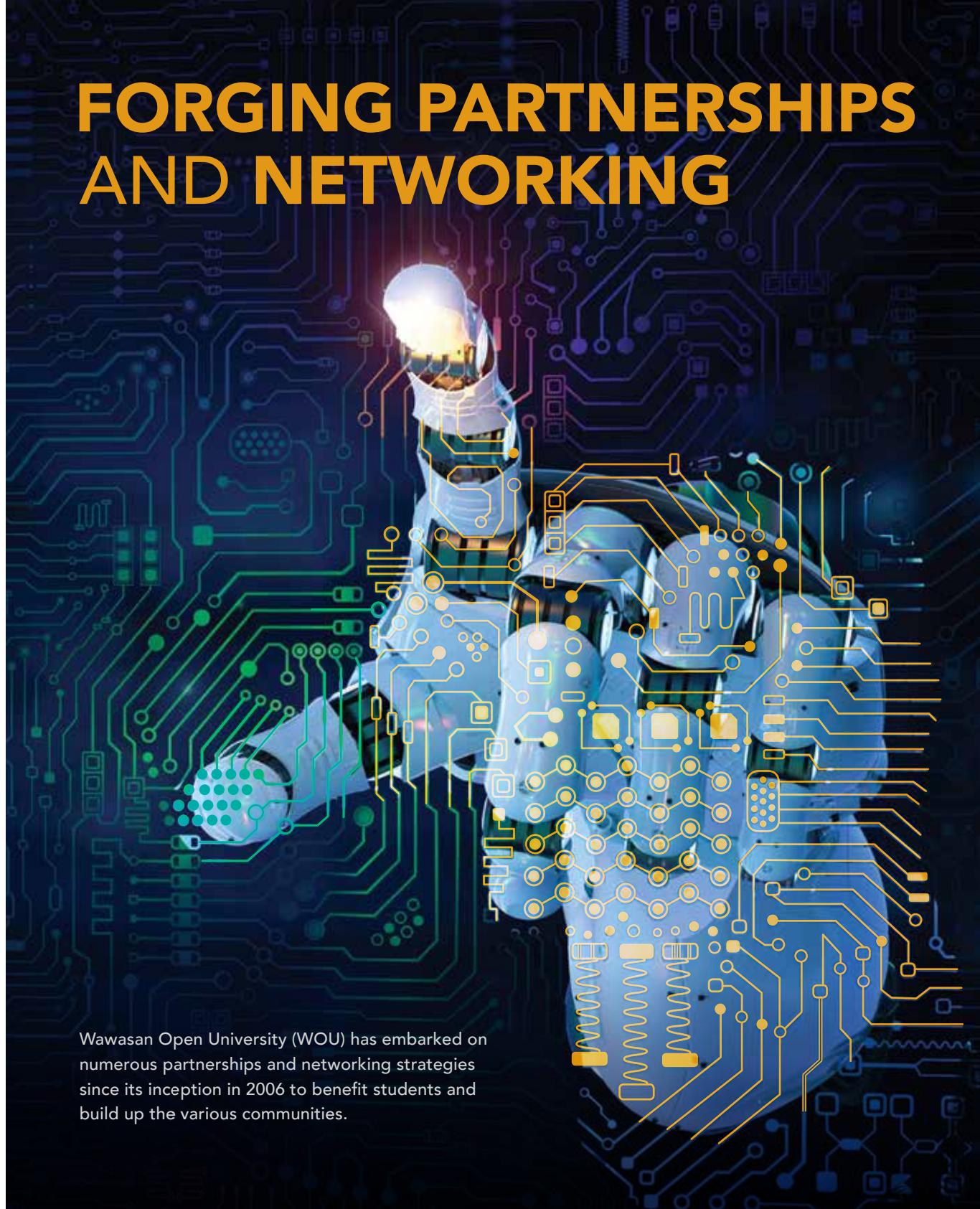


## FORGING PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING



Wawasan Open University (WOU) has embarked on numerous partnerships and networking strategies since its inception in 2006 to benefit students and build up the various communities.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The University recognises how important it is to forge strategic partnerships for mutual benefit and to reach a wider market segment. In this issue, we look at the recent collaborative initiatives that WOU has been engaged in along with some of the agreements signed in the past.

Student recruitment is the mainstay of any university, and it's the same at WOU. With this in mind, the University, intent on spreading its wings to East Malaysia, has successfully launched two new learning centres in Sabah and Sarawak.

We acknowledge the role of academic research to generate new knowledge and applications, besides raising the profile of the University. We therefore share in the joy of colleagues who have successfully received grants to undertake research and contribute to the community.

We are also glad to see academics from the various Schools representing WOU at conferences and other external events. The awards received will no doubt bring prestige and honour to the University.

Knowledge sharing through workshops and talks is one of the ways WOU continues to engage and enrich the community and public. We believe the University has its role to play not only as a generator of knowledge, but also in using its influence to fuel the socio-economic growth of the state and nation.

As we draw close to another year, let us look forward to Year 2020 with anticipation and renewed hope! At WOU, we will continue to explore new opportunities to serve our students and the society at large in order to create a better future for all.

May you enjoy reading the contents of this latest issue. 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!'

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**KDN Permit:** PP 14958/11/2012 (031535)

**Published by**

Wawasan Open University [DU013(P)]

Wholly owned by Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd (700364-W)

**Printed by**

Cheong Seng Chan Sdn Bhd

Plot 10, Lorong Industrial Ringan Satu,

Juru Light Industrial Estate, 14100 Juru, Penang

# GLOBAL FIGURES DISCUSS FUTURE EDUCATION ROADMAP IN EDINBURGH

More than 500 policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners and thought leaders from 61 countries recently converged at the Scottish capital of Edinburgh to attend the ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF9) to discuss the future of education and learning globally.

The event was co-hosted by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in partnership with The Open University, United Kingdom (OUUK), at the BT Murrayfield Stadium from 9 to 12 September 2019. It served as a platform for education ministers, government officials, academics, administrators and civil societies to discuss and develop a roadmap to "future-proof" our education systems and meet the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

In line with its chosen theme of *Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning*, the forum's key focus was on how innovations are improving the quality of education and creating new spaces for lifelong learning. The four key sub-themes of PCF9 were Employability, Equity and Inclusion, Opening Up Education, and Technology.

WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan was one of the speakers for the plenary panel on Employability which deliberated on increasing employable skills of learners to prepare them for work life in the 21st century. The session was moderated by OUUK Pro-Chancellor Malcolm Sweeting.

Prof Chan shared her aspirations for WOU to progress beyond being a small private open distance learning (ODL) institution and create a thriving local ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship. She recalled her 13 years with the National University of Singapore (NUS)



▲ PCF9 was held at the famous stadium in Scotland.



▲ Prof Chan shares her thoughts.



▲ Prof Zoraini (centre) at the conference.

where she was the deputy president in charge of innovation and entrepreneurship. She now yearns to see a successful ecosystem in Penang, where WOU is headquartered, that creates jobs and builds the economy.

The other speakers on the panel on Employability were the ministers of education from Kiribati, Guyana, Bahamas, Seychelles and Grenada. Among the key personalities of PCF9 were Prof Asha Kanwar, President and Chief Executive Officer of COL; her predecessor Sir John Daniel; Prof Mary Kellett, Vice Chancellor of OUUK; and Prof Zoraini Wati Abas, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Educational Technology) of WOU.

Nations represented at the forum included Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Greece, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uganda, UK, USA, and Pacific Island countries like Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and New Zealand.

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by the Commonwealth Heads of Government and hosted by the Government of Canada, for the purpose of promoting and developing distance education and open learning.



▲ Prof Kanwar of COL delivers her address.

# FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

## THROUGH LINKAGES AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

**WOU has entered into agreements with a number of institutions over the years to share resources and expertise, promote teaching and learning, and conduct research for the benefit of society.**

### FACILITATE TEACHING OF DIPLOMA IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (DECE)

Six kindergartens, including Tadika KinderJoy in Ipoh (see photos), were appointed as learning laboratories by WOU for the teaching of its DECE programme nationwide. Each signed a 5-year agreement with the University sometime between April 2017 and March 2019 on this arrangement.



### HELP THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED TO UNDERTAKE ACADEMIC STUDIES

WOU signed a 2-year agreement with the St Nicholas Home Penang, in October 2018 to extend technical support to help blind and visually-impaired school students in Malaysia to have access to online learning resources and pursue higher academic qualifications.



### TRIPARTITE MOU WITH TOYOHASHI VARSITY AND DISTED FOR MUTUAL COOPERATION

WOU signed a 5-year agreement with Toyohashi University of Technology, Japan, and DISTED College, Penang, on 15 December 2015, to explore collaboration in the development of programmes, R&D, and faculty and student exchanges.

### JOINT COLLABORATION IN THE AREA OF DIGITAL LEARNING

WOU inked a 3-year memorandum of understanding with Lubeck University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and the University of South Africa on 23 March 2018 towards the development of courses for online delivery to various student groups.

### OFFER MANDARIN CLASSES BY KONG ZI INSTITUTE

WOU signed a 6-year agreement with the Kong Zi Institute at Universiti Malaya (UM) on 5 December 2016 for the offering of an elective course on Teaching Mandarin as a Second Language to WOU students.

### LICENSE WOU COURSE MATERIALS TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS

WOU inked four agreements between May 2016 and March 2019 with the Open University of Mauritius for the licensing of various course materials to the southern Indian Ocean varsity for a 5-year period. WOU also entered into a 3-year agreement with Botswana Open University (BOU) in May 2017 for the licensing of its course materials to BOU.

### REACH OUT TO REFUGEES WITH THE HELP OF A GERMAN NGO

The University signed three learning agreements with Kiron Open Higher Education for Refugees, an NGO based in Germany which offers free online learning opportunities to underserved communities. The first agreement was signed in March 2017, and the others in May and December 2018, to bring Kiron's programmes to refugees in Southeast Asia. The agreements facilitated credit transfer of courses undertaken by the students under the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to WOU's Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Computer Systems and Networks, and also its Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management programmes.

► Signing of the agreement between Malaysian Association of Company Secretaries (MACS) and WOU.



### OTHER COLLABORATIONS

ORGANISATION	START	EXPIRY	AGREEMENT
Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver	1 Jan 2017	31 Dec 2022	License Agreement - CeMBA/CeMPA
Malaysian Association of Company Secretaries	10 Jan 2019	9 Jan 2024	MoU
Penang Skills Development Centre	15 Jan 2019	14 Jan 2024	Training Partner Agreement
Silpakorn University, Bangkok	4 Dec 2018	3 Dec 2023	MoA
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand	31 Oct 2016	30 Oct 2019	MoU
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor	1 Jun 2018	30 May 2021	MoU - Research Collaboration

▲ MACS President Tang Chan Ming (left) and Prof Zoraini Watie Abas of WOU exchange documents.

# COLLABORATION CALL FOR 'PEARLS' OF PENANG AND LABUAN

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... these institutions have allowed the IBFC to be a leading midshore international business and financial centre for the Asia-Pacific region.

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▼ Mah (left) and Prof Zoraini watch as Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas launches the event.



Businesses based in Penang have been encouraged to take advantage of significant liberalisation in the financial hub on Labuan island in Sabah. This follows the Labuan Financial Services Authority's (Labuan FSA) move to liberalise some operational requirements, including a policy to give entities there the flexibility to establish marketing offices anywhere in Malaysia, instead of only in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru.

According to Labuan FSA director-general Danial Mah Abdullah, about 170 companies from Penang have already benefited from the use of Labuan for various purposes, with loans worth more than half a billion ringgit channelled through Labuan to Penang companies for business expansion. "With more Labuan financial institutions and entities setting up offices here, this will generate more business activities and more employment opportunities in Penang."

Mah was speaking during a talk on business and career opportunities in the Labuan International Business and Financial Centre (Labuan IBFC) organised by Labuan FSA at WOU's main campus in Penang on 21 September 2019. Labuan FSA is the regulator for Labuan IBFC. Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas officially launched the event, with WOU lending support as the venue sponsor.

The talk was designed to assist local professionals, university students and the business community to explore business,



▲ The crowd at the opening session.

product and financial services opportunities in Labuan, as well as career prospects in international business and finance.

Mah hoped that the event would pave way for the two "pearls" - the Pearl of the Orient (as Penang is known) and the Pearl of Borneo (as Labuan is referred to) - to work together.

Labuan IBFC currently employs about 6,000 people. Mah estimated the number to more than double in the next few years because of new regulatory requirements for business entities to have a minimum number of full-time employees. Labuan IBFC would therefore require talents in various fields, including banking, insurance, finance, accounting, auditing, law, tax, corporate secretarial, compliance functions and information technology.

Mah, who was born in Penang, explained that Labuan was declared as an IBFC in 1990 to complement the domestic financial activities in Kuala Lumpur, strengthen the contribution of the financial services sector in the country and spur economic activities on the island.

Labuan IBFC is currently home to 55 banks, 217 insurance companies, 61 trust companies, more than 300 leasing companies, 43 commodity trading companies and many fintech related firms that conduct digital assets and cryptocurrency businesses. Mah pointed out that "these institutions have allowed the IBFC to be a leading midshore international business and financial centre for the Asia-Pacific region".

Meanwhile, WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic & Educational Technology) Prof Zoraini Wati Abas said, "This event sits in well within the mission and the driving force behind the University's success in producing quality graduates who will further enhance the nation's ability to move forward in the international arena."

The event was attended by more than 120 people. Among the presenters were Association of Labuan Trust Companies (ALTC) Chairman Datuk Chin Chee Kee, Association of Labuan Banks (ALB) Chairman Khairudin Abdul Rahman and Labuan Investment Bank Group (LIBG) Chairman Dato' Howard Choo.

# WOU PARTNERS WITH FIC FOR LEARNING CENTRE IN MIRI



▲ Prof Chan encourages the graduates to study further with WOU at Fajar.



▲ Prof Chan (right) presents the Diploma. At left is Dr Tham.



▲ Best student award recipient.

WOU has started its second academic base in Sarawak with the opening of a learning centre at Fajar International College (FIC) in Miri, complementing its regional centre in Kuching which has been in operation since September 2009.

The partnership with FIC will help to open up greater opportunities in higher education among the people of Sarawak for self-enrichment and professional advancement. It will also enable WOU to further stamp its presence in East Malaysia.

The University is offering five programmes via open distance learning (ODL) at FIC. They include the Diploma in Early Childhood Education and the Commonwealth Executive MBA. The other three programmes are the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting, Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management and Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Human Resource Management.

WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan envisages the partnership to spur students who had left FIC without completing a degree and jumped into the workforce to peruse lifelong learning options with WOU through its open distance learning platforms.

"We are enthusiastic about this venture into Miri as we hope that this would bring about several forms of exchanges between the community, college and University that will enrich us all," she said at the launch of the centre at FIC on 13 July 2019.

"With FIC as our learning centre, WOU can help support your students and the students in Miri in deciding the best route for their future," she added. "It would also help address Sarawak's needs for advanced knowledge and skills in various sectors."

The launching ceremony was officiated by Telang Usan assemblyman Dennis Ngau representing Sarawak State Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Dato' Gerawat Gala. In his speech read out by Ngau, Gala said: "With this smart partnership and collaboration, WOU will become another premier learning centre in the northern region of Sarawak for the growing population of students sitting for their SPM and STPM examinations every year, including students from Fajar and other colleges as well as learning institutions in the northern region."

Also present were FIC chief executive officer Dr Peter Tham, and WOU's director of marketing and regional centre operations Chong Kong Hoong.

Prof Chan and Chong also joined Dr Tham and about 160 graduating students at FIC's 12th convocation ceremony at a private hotel in Miri on 27 September 2019. The vast majority graduated with diplomas in disciplines like Accounting, Business Studies, Human Resource Management, and Occupational Safety and Health.

In her convocation address, Prof Chan urged the graduates to consider what WOU is offering when reflecting on their future options. She elaborated on WOU's mission to transform and empower higher education in the country and globally through ODL.

"With the advent and evolution of the Internet and other information technologies, online or distance learning is becoming more and more popular," she said. "The ODL mode is becoming prevalent because of the flexibility and convenience it provides. WOU students across the country can attend class sessions from home or anywhere, as well as complete and submit assignments online."

# WOU A KEY PARTNER IN EU-FUNDED ODL RESEARCH

WOU is collaborating with seven foreign institutions in a global research project supported by the European Union (EU) with funding worth almost a million euros. The grant was awarded under the BUKA (Better Universities and Knowledge for All) scheme which focuses on advancing equity and access to higher education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

The three-year project, set to commence in February 2020, is geared towards supporting this thrust through the use of inclusive instructional design and learning analytics in ODL. WOU will host an international conference upon the project's completion in 2023 with presentation of papers and reports by the respective partners.

The project application was among 163 selected for funding by EU out of 840 submissions from around the world this year, and was rated under the top 'Very Good Quality' category. The partners will share the 800,000 to 950,000 euros grant.

The project is led by Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), Finland. The only other European institution involved is Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland. The rest, all from Southeast Asia, are WOU and Open University Malaysia (OUM) from Malaysia; Universitas Terbuka (UT) and Universitas Negeri Padang from Indonesia; and University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) and Mindanao State University-Illigan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) from the Philippines.

WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic & Educational Technology) Prof Zoraini Wati Abas is the leader of the WOU research team. The other WOU team members are School of Business & Administration Acting Dean Prakash V Arumugam, School of Science & Technology Dean Assoc Prof

Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei, School of Education, Languages & Communications Dean Prof Balakrishnan Muniandy, and Instructional Design for Engaging Experiences (IDeX) Assistant Manager Fauziyah Md Aris.

The project promotes greater online engagement and blended learning environments, learning designs, materials, activities and assessments, as well as more effective and personalised support for distance learners. These would help improve learner engagement and retention.

It endeavours to reach these goals through capacity building of the teaching, technical and instructional design staff in the partner institutions in developing inclusive instructional design and implementing learning analytics.

"For capacity building, Tampere, which is skilled in learning analytics, and DCU will take the lead," explained Prof Zoraini. "So it involves the transfer of technology from Europe to us in Southeast Asia and the beneficiaries will be the students. And our target would be the distance education learners. We would be able to develop programmes and design courses with the aid of data analytics and new technologies."

"We received the good news of the funding in August. We are happy because it is a prestigious project and prestigious funding encompassing a large amount, and we can better help the students," she added.

Summing up the WOU team's enthusiasm, Prakash said: "This project and funding allow WOU to shine in the international limelight, affording us the opportunity to show the world that we are a force to be reckoned with, especially in the area of distance learning and capacity building."

▼ Prof Zoraini (centre) with team members (from left), Prof Balakrishnan, Dr Bong, Fauziyah and Prakash.



# LIFELONG LEARNING RESEARCH GRANT BY EDUCATION MINISTRY



▼ Dr Por, the project leader, highlighting a point to her SELC colleagues, Prof Balakrishnan (seated) and Ong (left).

WOU, through the School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC), has been awarded a grant of RM60,740 from the Ministry of Education for its decisive involvement in a public-private universities collaboration for research and development.

The allocation from the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) is for a two-year research titled *Developing an Eclectic Self-Regulated Lifelong Learning Model in the Era of IR 4.0* conducted from September 2019 to August 2021.

The FRGS is awarded by the ministry's Department of Higher Education for the purpose of developing good quality human capital, and encouraging theories, concepts and ideas that can accelerate discoveries and innovative creations.

SELC lecturer Dr Por Fei Ping is the project leader. The other members of the research team are SELC Dean Prof Balakrishnan Muniandy and Senior Lecturer Ong Cheng Teik; Prof Fong Soon Fook, Director of Centre for e-Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah; and Senior Lecturer Dr Rabiatul Adawiah Ahmad Rashid, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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The study aims to propose an eclectic model of lifelong self-regulated learning to empower lifelong learners to manage their learning effectively...

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This timely research seeks to address the new climate of continuing learning by developing an eclectic self-regulated lifelong learning model that can be implemented in higher education institutions in Malaysia and beyond. As it is, lifelong learning has become essential for one to stay relevant in a fast-changing work environment, particularly with the advent of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) where knowledge is constantly evolving.

The research team will analyse the various components and attributes of existing models of self-regulated learning and lifelong learning so as to synthesise them. The synthesised models will then be hybridised to design/produce an eclectic self-regulated lifelong learning model to meet local needs.

Dr Por explained that self-regulated learning equips lifelong learners with principles, skills, strategies and values to sustain and manage their learning and stay motivated. "The study aims to propose an eclectic model of lifelong self-regulated learning to empower lifelong learners to manage their learning effectively," she said.



▼ (From right) Prof Balakrishnan, Dr Por and Ong engaged in discussion.

# INTRODUCTORY HYPNOTHERAPY COURSE BEGINS AT WOU



▲ Dr Mohammad Abdul Rahman teaching a class.



▲ Dr Gayathri (left) performs hypnosis on a student.



▲ Getting another student to relax.

WOU has launched a unique short course ideal for anyone interested to learn about hypnosis and clinical hypnotherapy. Titled *Introductory Module to Clinical Hypnotherapy*, the beginner-level course is run by the School of Humanities & Social Sciences (SHSS) in collaboration with trainers from the International College of Clinical Hypnosis Practitioners (ICCHP) Asia.

The 72-hour course, which started its first class on 21 September 2019, provides deep insights into the principles and practice of hypnotherapy for medical professionals, trainers, counsellors, educators and students. It comprises over 64 hours of lectures and practical sessions over four weekends (total of 8 days) and eight hours of tutorials.

Conducted at the main campus in Penang, it basically enables learners to make an informed decision on whether hypnotherapy training is what they want before taking the practitioner training courses. "You control how far you want to go into the fascinating world of hypnotherapy, whether you want to proceed to the intermediate and advanced levels," explained SHSS Dean Assoc Prof Dr S Nagarajan.

The course can also be taken as a stand-alone training option for those seeking personal exploration or contemplating a new career. Students learn a comprehensive range of hypnotherapy skills and techniques, underpinned by an understanding of psychology, psychotherapy and therapeutic hypnosis.

"You will start by mastering the hypnotic process and then

be introduced to a variety of therapeutic processes and their applications, leading to understanding and applying hypnotherapy techniques," Dr Nagarajan said.

The trainers in the course are qualified practitioners from ICCHP Asia who have access to the latest research in clinical and therapeutic hypnosis, and provide safe, ethical and effective use of hypnotherapy. They include Dr Gayathri Kumarasuriar, a psychiatrist and clinical hypnotherapist; Dr Mohammad Abdul Rahman, an Associate Professor in Psychiatry; Synthia Surin, a clinical hypnotherapist and professional development coach; Thevi Sinnadurai, an empowerment coach, a clinical hypnotherapist and trainer for hypnotherapy programmes; and Jyothi Chelamcharla, a psychologist and hypnotherapist.

WOU will issue a certificate of completion to all participants who fulfil the course criteria based on attendance and assessment. This is an opportunity for individuals to upgrade themselves professionally, with the certification providing added value for their jobs and careers.

In addition, the trainers will assist participants to obtain additional certification for their professional development from the ICCHP, UK, a London-based independent private educational establishment that aims to deliver the highest quality blended learning and teaching programme in clinical hypnosis and clinical hypnotherapy to students around the world. Its hypnosis and hypnotherapy training courses are validated by the UK General Hypnotherapy Standards Council (GHSC).

**WOU invites learners to sign up for the next round of the course at the main campus early next year. The fee is an affordable RM3,500 for the entire duration of the course stretching almost 4 months. Early registrants are entitled to a RM500 discount.**

**For further inquiries, contact SHSS Senior Lecturer Irmadura Ramli at 04-2180 425 or email [irmadurar@wou.edu.my](mailto:irmadurar@wou.edu.my).**

# WOU's WINGS SPREAD TO THE 'LAND BELOW THE WIND'

WOU marked another important milestone in its mission to ensure higher education access across Malaysia with the setting up of its first learning centre in Sabah. The University sealed a smart partnership with Almacrest International College (AIC) in Kota Kinabalu to enable adult learners in the state to pursue its tertiary programmes via open distance learning (ODL) at AIC.

The college will initially offer two of WOU's bachelor degree programmes [Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management and Bachelor of Business (Corporate Administration)] and one postgraduate programme (Commonwealth Executive MBA). The move also paves the way for WOU to more effectively reach out to offer its higher education to the people of East Malaysia.

The signing of the collaboration agreement between both parties took place at AIC's premise in Kota Kinabalu on 26 September 2019. The Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor of WOU, Prof Lily Chan, and the Chief Executive Officer of AIC, Stephanie Yen Chung Wai, signed on behalf of their respective institutions.

The ceremony was witnessed by WOU's Kuching Regional Centre Director Jimmy Chai and AIC's Deputy CEO Dudi Pan Yen Far.

In welcoming the partnership, Prof Chan stressed that the move will further strengthen WOU's effort in reaching out to the communities in Sabah with its offer of in-demand tertiary qualifications for career advancement. "It also supports our objective of globalising the University's programmes and consequently helping the academics, students and their faculties to become more competitive in global markets," she said.

Prof Chan expressed hope that the collaboration with Almacrest would inspire many more Sabahans to invest in education for a better future, and motivate employers and companies in the state to upskill and reskill their workforces for greater productivity. "Agreements like this one with Almacrest can increase the opportunities for WOU to shape



▲ Prof Chan (2nd from left) and Stephanie Yen exchange documents. With them are Jimmy Chai (left) and Dudi Pan (right).



▲ Prof Chan arriving at Almacrest.



▼ The WOU team pose with the management and students of AIC.

and sustain a strong and purposeful partnership with our sisters in East Malaysia."

She assured that WOU is always committed to widening access to higher education to all Malaysians as this is part of its mission to help improve lives by increasing self-knowledge, job prospects and civic participation.

Meanwhile Stephanie Yen of Almacrest highlighted in her speech the benefits to Sabahans in pursuing higher learning with WOU. "This collaboration goes in tandem with our vision of becoming an education hub here in Sabah, providing innovative courses to our potential students."

"We are grateful for this opportunity to work with WOU in providing flexible learning modes for degree and master's qualifications," she added. "With this collaboration, we can make higher learning more accessible to students as well as working adults."

Among those present at the signing ceremony were WOU's Marketing and Regional Centre Operations Director Chong Kong Hoong, as well as the Board of Governors, Board of Directors and students of Almacrest.

AIC, established in August 2004, is one of the pioneers of private higher education in Sabah. The fast-growing college currently offers six diploma programmes in the fields of retail management, accountancy, marketing, leisure management, office administration and economics.



**COLLABORATION AGREEMENT SIGNING CEREMONY**  
BETWEEN  
**WAWASAN OPEN UNIVERSITY** AND **ALMACREST INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE**  
26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019

▼ Prof Chan (2nd from left) and Stephanie Yen sign as Jimmy Chai (left) and Dudi Pan (right) watch.

# LAURELS OF RECOGNITION FOR WOU ACHIEVERS

True to the spirit of excellence espoused by Wawasan Open University, our family of dedicated academic members have in recent years earned an array of distinguished accolades and prizes for their contributions to education, industry and society, at both national and international arenas.



**PROF ANNA CHRISTINA ABDULLAH** of the School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC) was appointed by the Ministry of Education as a Council Member of the English Language Standards and Quality Council for the period between 2 November 2018 to 1 November 2020.



School of Humanities & Social Sciences (SHSS) **DEPUTY DEAN JASMINE EMMANUEL** was one of the six authors of a helpful publication for university students and professionals titled *Essential Communication Skills in the Workplace*. They each received an award certificate during the Innovation Day celebration ceremony held at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Melaka in December 2018.



Lecturer **SEAN OOI LI HSIEN** of SELC was the Northern Representative for the Malaysian-American Alumni Partnership (MAAP) for the term between 2016 and 2018.



Lecturers **SEAN OOI LI HSIEN** and **ARATHAI DIN EAK** of SELC came out on top at the 32nd Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) in Vietnam in October 2018. They won the Gold Medal under the Best Practice Award category for their research paper titled *Implementation and Challenges of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL): The Assessor's Perspective*.



**ASSOC PROF DR BALAKRISHNAN MUNIAPPAN** of the School of Business & Administration (SBA) won the Best Professor in Human Resource Management award at the World HRD Congress 2017 held in Mumbai on 15 February 2017.

Lecturer **DR POR FEI FING** of SELC won the Si2te 2019 bronze medal under the Educational Item category at the SIRIM Invention, Innovation & Technology Expo (Si2TE) held in Kulim, Kedah, from 16 to 18 April 2019. She was the team leader in developing the prototype *Think eReader: Pedagogical-led OER (Open Educational Resources) for Metacognitive Reading Skills Among Elementary Readers*. The event was organised by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and SIRIM in collaboration with the National STEM Centre.

Dr Por was also in the team that won the bronze medal under the ICT and Multimedia category for the prototype on *3DARP: 3D Shapes Augmented Reality Physical Multimedia System for Primary School Students*.



Academics **CH'NG PING PING, DR OOI CHIA YI, OOH SEOW LING, CHEAH SEEH LEE** (left to right in above photo) and **IRMADURA RAMLI**, of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences (SHSS) won the Distinguished Paper Award at the International Conference on Education and Learning (ICEL) in Tokyo in August 2018 for their research on *Development and Psychometric Properties of Psychological Capital Questionnaire in Online Distance Learning Environment*.



**SBA ACTING DEAN PRAKASH V ARUMUGAM** won the Education Leadership Award at the Golden Globe Tigers Award 2016 ceremony in Kuala Lumpur in April 2016. The award was based on a nomination by a group of students from poor families whom he had mentored from the time of their STPM studies till they graduated from university. It was awarded for leadership demonstrated in support of the students' educational journey.

# PRODUCE INNOVATIVE ENGINEERS WITH SYNERGY AND COLLABORATION, SAYS VC

While it is imperative that we churn out engineering talent that is innovative, this responsibility should not lie with the university alone. It requires the government, industry and community to also pool their resources for the purpose.

Speaking on this need to train innovative engineers, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan recently stressed that there must be synergy and collaboration among all the parties to achieve the common goal of producing innovative, future-proof engineers.

She spoke on this in her presentation on *A University Perspective* as one of the keynote speakers at the inaugural Future Engineer Development Summit at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) held on 18 and 19 September 2019.

Prof Chan specifically called for government commitments, partnerships with industries and collaborations among higher education institutions in Malaysia's northern corridor. She said engineers must be trained to not just create knowledge but become future employers as well.

"In the new era, universities have to move from imparting knowledge to creating knowledge and training creators of knowledge," she added. "They must take the lead and become engines of innovation for the community."

**As the former CEO of NUS Enterprise, the entrepreneurial arm of the National University of Singapore (NUS), she also shared her experience in establishing BLOCK71**



▲ Participants at the summit.



▲ Dr Wendy Bong.

**Singapore. The seven-storey project has now become a beacon for the community, and home to hundreds of tech-related start-ups, venture capitalists and incubators, she said.**

She expressed optimism that George Town can become such an ecosystem, creating, attracting and providing more jobs, and thereby become a hotbed for Industry 4.0 talents.

Meanwhile, WOU School of Science & Technology Dean Assoc Prof Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei chaired the working group on *Future Proofing Curriculum*.

The summit was organised by the Penang STEM Education & Workforce Council to identify the challenges in developing future-ready engineers. The participants comprised representatives from industry, academia, government, professional bodies and NGOs.

## INSPIRING A PASSION FOR LIFELONG AND LIFEWIDE LEARNING

The concept of lifelong learning is well known to generally everyone, but not many people understand the importance of lifewide learning.

Prof Abdul Karim Alias has been promulgating the significance of both to his students and the public. According to the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) academic, a wide range of new knowledge, skills, competencies and values can be obtained through lifelong and lifewide learning in an informal setting.

Speaking at a public talk titled *Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All* at the main campus on 19 October 2019, he stressed on the importance of going beyond one's field of expertise to explore other topics, and then using that knowledge to help others. The talk was organised by the School of Education, Languages & Communications.

"Lifelong learning empowers people and communities to take control of their destiny," he said. "Cultivate a growth

mindset for lifelong learning by learning something new each and every moment."

Prof Abdul Karim, who serves at USM as a Professor of Food Technology and as Director of its Centre for Development of Academic Excellence (CDAE), truly embodies lifelong and lifewide learning himself. He teaches his USM students and on the Internet, and has collected a number of e-badges for completing online courses. He has uploaded numerous videos on his YouTube channel to help others to learn. He also writes for newspapers and his blog, produces research papers, and listens to e-books while driving.



▲ Prof Karim is passionate about learning new things in life.

# WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR GOOD BUSINESS

Whether one is in business, government, industry or other line of work, one needs to invariably undertake projects, formulate strategies and make decisions which come with risks. There is therefore a strong need to understand, quantify and visualise the risks, and make predictions on the likely results.

More than 15 staff members and students of WOU attended a workshop on *Quantitative Risk Analysis and Simulation* at the main campus on 14 September 2019 where they were exposed to issues like quantitative analysis, financial modelling, risk management, and business risk for the entrepreneur.



▲ The participants learning about risk assessment.

Organised by the School of Science & Technology in collaboration with Edustats Solutions, the half-day workshop saw insights on risk analysis, simulation techniques, forecasting with and without data, optimisation techniques, and identifying critical success factors with tornado analysis.

It was conducted by Harley Ooi, co-founder of Edustats Solutions, who has worked with various Malaysian government-linked companies in the area of quantitative risk management. With more than 15 years of experience in training, he focuses on using quantitative methodology to solve various industrial problems, employing forecasting and simulation techniques. Ooi is particularly skilled in predicting where markets are moving, developing disrupting solutions and business models.

During the workshop he introduced the participants to the Risk Simulator, a Monte Carlo simulation, forecasting and optimisation software. This is a technique that seeks to understand the risks of a decision by exploring the potential outcomes.

Ooi ended his session with a discussion on the variables in a simulation and applying precision and error control. A similar workshop was conducted at WOU's Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre on October 5th to create awareness on the importance of risk management.

## WOU DONS SERVE AS JUDGES AT NATIONAL EDUCATION EVENT

The Education Ministry's Institute of Teacher Education (IPGM) recently selected two academics from WOU's School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC) to act as judges at its national seminar on educational research. WOU was the only private institution of higher learning that was extended such a privilege by IPGM.

SELC Dean Prof Balakrishnan Muniandy and Lecturer Dr Christine Por Fei Ping were given the honour to serve in the roles during the event held at the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) Penang campus in Gelugor from 27 to 29 August 2019. Both academics received certificates of appreciation on the last day.

A total of 101 presenters from various schools, colleges and institutes of teacher education from across Malaysia put forward their research findings during the seminar. They were judged based on their contents and presentation skills.

The seminar was held in conjunction with the National Research and Education Innovation Conference and IPG Book Fair 2019 jointly organised by IPGM and the IPG Penang campus.



▲ Bukit Bendera MP Wong Hon Wai presents Dr Por with a certificate of appreciation.

The conference cum book fair was launched by Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik. Among those in attendance were Deputy Director-General of Education (Teacher's Professionalism Development) Dato' Sulaiman Wak and IPGM Rector Dr Rusmini Ku Ahmad.

# WOU SHOWCASES COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS TO MITI ENTOURAGE

Researchers at WOU have successfully collaborated with their peers from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Sanmina-SCI Sdn Bhd on two innovative projects to heighten performance in industries.

Both projects are supported by CREST (acronym for Collaborative Research in Engineering, Science and Technology), an industry-led initiative which facilitates and sponsors research and development activities between industry, academia and the government in the electrical and electronics sector.

The projects were among several showcased at the CREST showroom in Penang during a visit by a 10-member delegation from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) led by deputy minister Dr Ong Kian Ming on 5 September 2019. WOU's School of Science & Technology Senior Lecturer Dr Tan Choo Jun was on hand to demonstrate and explain the two projects to the guests.

The first project titled *Manufacturing Mobile Learning System* saw the researchers creating an Android-based application, or



▲ Dr Tan (right) explaining the benefits of the project to Dr Ong.



▲ Dr Ong and the team from Miti at the CREST showroom.

Android App. It helps in bringing about significant reductions in product defects, enhancing productivity in a real industry work environment.

The second project on *A Holistic Approach for Prioritisation of Product Quality Improvement in a Complex Manufacturing Environment* was completed with a cross-platform Java-based application via a laptop. It serves to boost efficiency, especially by identifying the critical set of parameters and problem-solution principles to achieve cost savings.

## WOU LECTURER ADDRESSES LANGUAGE LEARNING CONFERENCE IN INDIA

Lecturer Dr Por Fei Ping from WOU's School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC) recently shared her experience and knowledge on online language learning at the 2nd International Conference on *Innovations in the Teaching of English Language and Literature* (ICITELL 2019) held in Tamil Nadu, India.

As one of the keynote speakers, Dr Por delivered a presentation on *Digital Engagement in Online Language Learning Environment*. She spoke on humanising technology to engage learners for deep learning and address the issue of language anxiety.

The conference on 16 and 17 August 2019 was hosted by Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), a private university in the city of Vellore, and organised by its School of Social Sciences and Languages. The event was officially launched by VIT Chancellor Dr G Viswanathan.

In her speech, Dr Por explained the link between humanising technology and the probability of positive learning experience and knowledge transfer. "When instruction is accompanied with social cues, the activation of social response

occurs. This improves active cognitive processing and the quality of learning outcome."

She also stated that research has indicated language anxiety to be a significant affective factor negatively correlated with language achievement. "Secure learning atmosphere and opportunities encourage learners to keep practising without feeling intimidated," she said. "By engaging in a non-threatening learning environment, self-confidence is also built and this leads to positive language achievement."

She added that humanising technology helps address the problem of language anxiety in learners as they are able to engage in a language learning environment without much fear, thus enhancing their competence.

Seven international experts on English Language Teaching from Malaysia, Oman and Bangladesh were invited to the conference to share latest trends and techniques in the field of language teaching. A total of 478 participants, mainly from India, also attended to share and partake in research findings.



▲ Dr Por being honoured at the conference.

# VETERAN TEACHER PURSUES ENGLISH DEGREE TO ENHANCE HER CAPACITY

She has been working as an English language facilitator for children and adults for the last 16 years. Yet Seow Yim Ho of Ipoh is determined to further strengthen her professional capacity by adding relevant new academic qualifications to her many years of experience.

The veteran teacher is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English Studies (BAES) degree at WOU, having enrolled in January 2016.

"Studying an undergraduate programme at WOU enables me to gain knowledge that I can put in practice while conducting my English classes," she said. "As an English Language teacher, WOU courses like Critical Reading, Creative Writing, Introduction to British and American Literature, and English Language for Business Communication are extremely useful." Seow is currently conducting lessons for students aged 5 to 18 years. She occasionally holds classes for working adults interested in improving their command of English.

She began her teaching career in 1987 in Perak but left after a few years to spend several years in Singapore. There she worked in a bank, in the sales and marketing department of a few companies, and as a private secretary. She also obtained her Diploma in Administrative Management then.

However, she returned to teaching in 2003 by joining Avenue Creative Learning in Ipoh where she remains employed till today. She also possesses a Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Seow chose BAES due to her passion in learning English. "I feel that it is necessary for me to get a degree in English



as it is connected to my career," she explained. "I want to learn more about the language and equip myself with the knowledge to guide my students more effectively."

She feels the BAES degree will open up opportunities for her to venture into corporate training, like conducting Business English workshops. "My main aim is to educate myself and not to let my mind go idle," she stressed. "We must constantly strive for excellence in whatever that we do."

"As such, we have to upgrade ourselves and continue with learning. Never stop learning and improving in order to find personal fulfilment in life," she says, emphasising her drive to keep learning in a single word: "Tenacity."

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### WOU Regional and Learning Centres

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### Bandar Utama Regional Support Centre

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## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

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