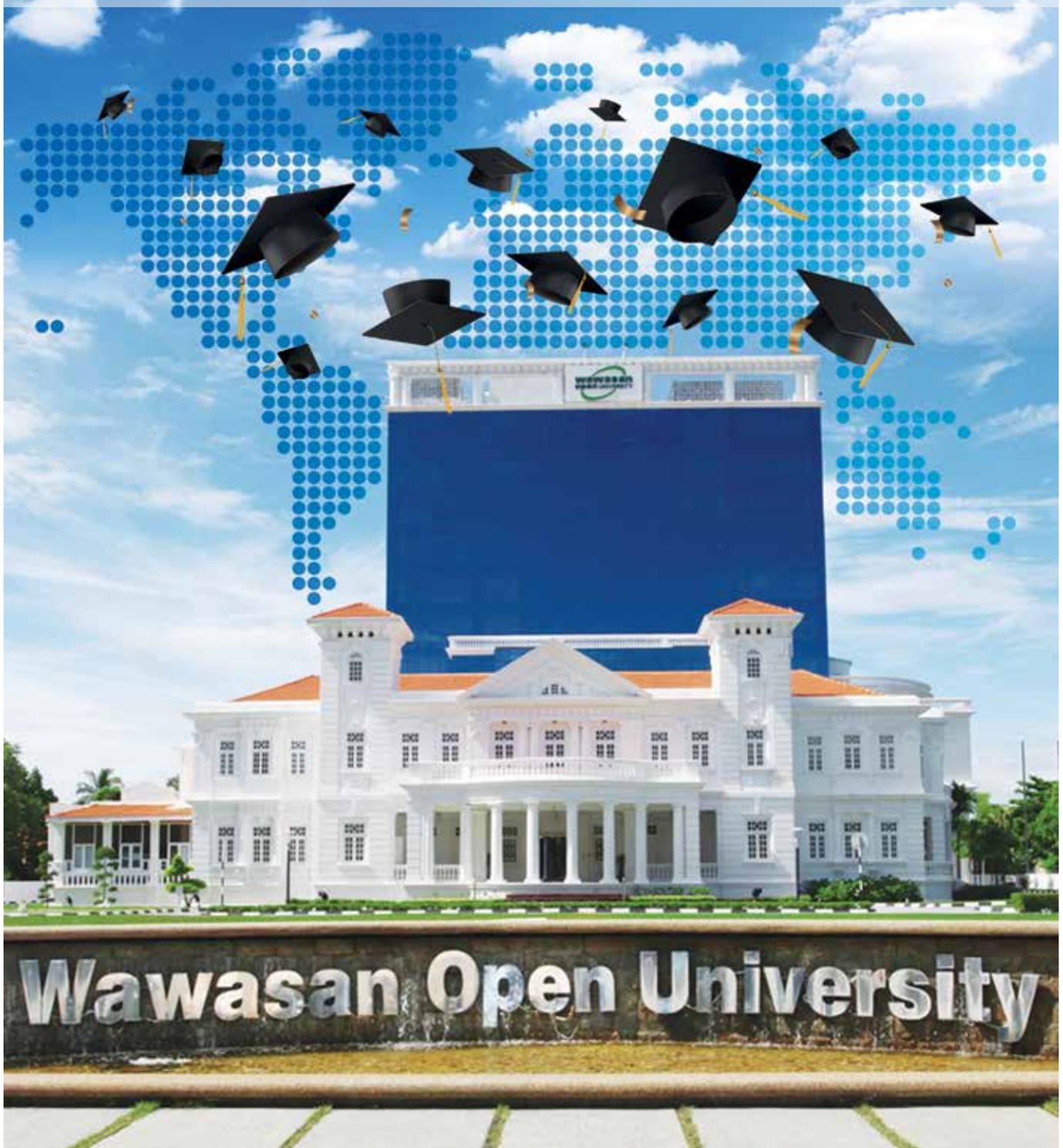


WOU's **11th e-GRADUATION**



CONTENTS

03	In The Know New Digital Business degree to mould future-ready talents FlexLearn for better personalised learning for students
04	In The Limelight Master's degree graduates offer unforgettable stories of fortitude
06	Reminiscing on their undergraduate study aspirations
08	COVER STORY Historic virtual ceremony sees 684 proud graduates being rolled out
10	Feature Pioneer childhood education diploma holders bring shine to graduation
11	WOU's Accounting degree gives trio swift path to CIMA qualification
12	Knowledge Sharing Mechatronics a key to innovation and recovery from pandemic Creativity needed for logistics, supply chain firms to rise above disruptions
13	Enlightening talk on fixed-term employment contract
14	Bringing the wonder of computational intelligence to our real world
15	Reaching Out Scholarship to disadvantaged students in memory of late staff
16	In the Lives of Students Graduate in prize-winning team gives back to her alma mater

EDITOR'S NOTE

A new year has begun- and we are still in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and waiting for life to return to some sort of normalcy akin to the pre-pandemic era.

In keeping with the times, WOU had to contend with conferring degrees on 684 graduates via a virtual graduation affair last year. The occasion also witnessed the first batch of 56 graduates receiving their Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE).

Three of WOU's accounting graduates were able to sit for the crucial exam towards the CIMA A-Star qualification, which they passed.

The University records its congratulations to all graduates from the Class of 2020, many of whom persevered and persisted to emerge victorious despite facing serious economic, financial and mental pressures.

WOU, never one to sit on its laurels, continued to engage its students and the community through various online talks and channels. Mindful of how digital transformation is rapidly changing the norms of doing business, the University developed the Bachelor of Digital Business (Honours) programme which is to be introduced in the May 2021 intake.

The University held several online talks to provoke its students and the public to think and be informed of the in-demand skills and types of jobs that are thriving in the current challenging climate. Mechatronics along with logistics and supply chain management are among the employment sectors that are performing well, and learners should know that they can get themselves equipped in these fields at WOU.

The University, in understanding the financial burdens and priorities of households, has set up scholarship awards to help its students. Among them is the new Lim Yeang See Scholarship, which it has awarded as a start to three on-campus learning students from socio-economically disadvantaged families.

As WOU continues to reach out as part of its corporate social responsibility, it is always gratifying when a student gives back to her alma mater as a form of appreciation. It was a touching gesture indeed from a recent MBA graduate who donated her share of a cash prize to the University (refer backpage).

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2021!

Chief Editor: Professor Lily Chan
(*Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor*)

Editorial Team: Agnes James, Rasidah Mion, Selvarani Suppiah

Photographer: Elaine Tan Xin Yi

Copy Editing: Cape Poetics

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

Published by

Wawasan Open University [DU013(P)]
 Wholly owned by Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd
 [200501018250 (700364-W)]

Printed by

Cheong Seng Chan Sdn Bhd
 Plot 10, Lorong Industrial Ringan Satu,
 Juru Light Industrial Estate, 14100 Juru, Penang

NEW DIGITAL BUSINESS DEGREE TO MOULD FUTURE-READY TALENTS

In view of the tremendous digital transformation happening in the business world, WOU is introducing the Bachelor of Digital Business (Honours)[BDBS] degree in May 2021 which furnishes up-to-date knowledge and current practices in the field.

The 120-credit programme run by the new School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) aims to produce future-ready talents competent in digital business issues. It can be completed in about four years.

While BDBS is an open distance learning (ODL) professional programme for career-driven individuals, the first year of study will however be delivered in an intensive mode to frontload all the work-oriented skills and make students appealing to industry. From the second year onwards, students can start full-time employment while they continue their learning under WOU's flexible study schedule.

BDBS is developed to equip students with in-demand skills like digital project management, digital marketing and data analytics. Students will learn nine courses in the first year - Digital Marketing Fundamentals, Digital Business Venture and Digital Commerce Foundation (1st semester); Website Development, Social Media Marketing and Digital Content Creation (2nd semester); and Solutions Marketing



& Sales, Google Analytics & Business Transformation, and Search Engine Optimisation (3rd semester). They will be tutored and mentored by industry experts

Graduates can work as a Digital Business Analyst, Digital Sales Manager, Digital Media Director, Digital Strategy and E-commerce Director, Digital Brand Director and Digital Media Specialist.

Applicants must have passed STPM with a minimum Grade C in any 2 subjects or obtained 5 Grade Bs in UEC Senior Middle III, and show a pass in Mathematics and English at SPM/UEC Senior Middle III, or have an equivalent qualification. Those with Diploma/Advanced Diploma or Matriculation/Foundation (minimum CGPA of 2.00), or equivalent qualifications, are also eligible for regular entry.

Alternatively, learners aged 21 years or above with relevant work experience can apply via APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning).

FLEXLEARN FOR BETTER PERSONALISED LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

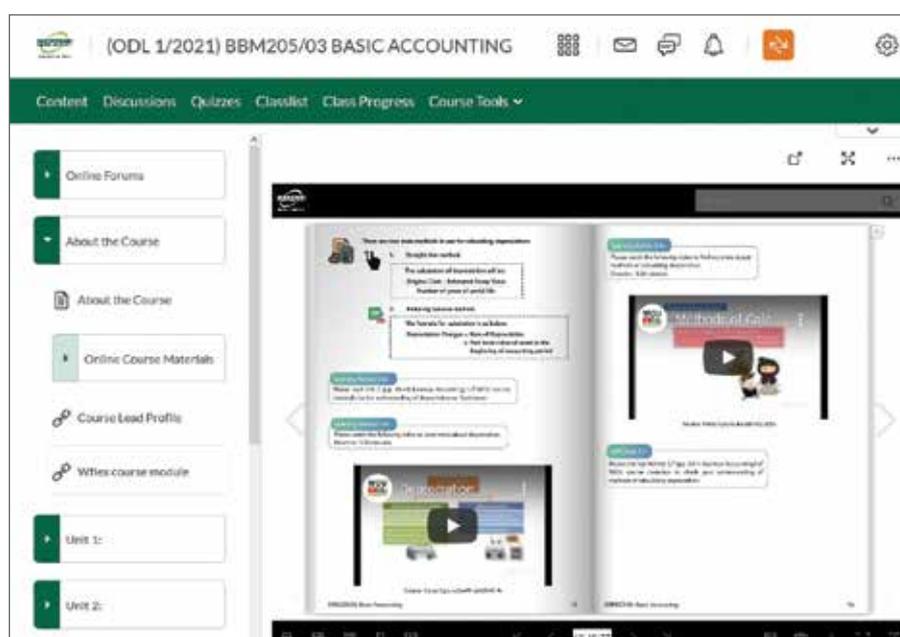
The University is pleased to announce that effective from 5 January 2021, all of its courses for open distance learning (ODL) and on-campus learning (OCL) will be launched on its new learning management system (LMS) platform known as FlexLearn.

WOU welcomes student feedback on **FlexLearn**, the University's new LMS. Students can email to lmsteam@wou.edu.my to offer their comments or suggestions.

With engagement being a priority and a key feature in FlexLearn, students will be able to experience deeper personalised learning in their courses. This interactive learning platform will also facilitate students to engage with their tutors and course leads.

FlexLearn provides a simple and organised interface, which makes it easy for students to view and navigate the course content. This also means that students are able to stay on track in their courses and view their individual study progression online.

With these new features, the University hopes that students will have a new e-learning experience that is not only more effective but enjoyable.



MASTER'S DEGREE GRADUATES OFFER UNFORGETTABLE STORIES OF FORTITUDE

A total of 114 students from WOU's postgraduate programmes proudly received their master's degrees during the University's e-graduation in 2020. Six graduates share their stories full of inspiration and grit.



EXPANDING HER SCOPE AND PROSPECTS AS EDUCATOR

Looi Kah Yoke can look forward to stronger income prospects after attaining the Master of Education (MEd), specialising in Education Management. Having only a bachelor's degree in biomedical science previously, she was paid lower than her colleagues when she embarked on a teaching career.

The 27-year-old from Bayan Lepas, Penang, is happy to have received a full scholarship under the WOU Bursary Award, thanks to her excellent CGPA for her undergraduate degree.

A relief teacher in national schools since August 2020, she has also been giving private tuition to primary and secondary school students for over three years. Before that, she worked for almost two years at a private tuition centre. "Since young, I wanted to be an inspirational educator because 'he who teaches learns'," she said. "It is worth the effort to realise my personal goal."

Her vision is to expand her private tutoring service while continuing to serve as a relief teacher at national schools. Looi is also a public speaking trainer at the Speech Academy. She wants to pass this skill on and train more students in the art of public speaking.



EQUIPPED WITH PSYCHOLOGY TO HELP PRESCHOOLERS

Sylvia Khou Chin Fang of Kluang, Johor, became motivated to learn about child psychology after the principal of a kindergarten where she taught allowed her to attend a course for autism. Encouraged by family and friends, she then enrolled and successfully completed the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology programme at WOU some years ago.

The 48-year-old has now bettered herself by earning the Master of Education degree, with specialisation in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language). She says she was driven to achieve this to sharpen her skills for teaching in English. "It was self-motivation that led me to enrol as I wanted to achieve a higher academic qualification," said Khou, who works as a freelancer in accounting and teaching.

With the MEd, she can now explore career options in schools, using her skills and knowledge to help boost learning among a broader group of students.



COMPLEMENTING CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE WITH MBA-CM

Venamurthy Ramana, 44, found that his MBA in Construction Management (MBA-CM) degree from WOU matched perfectly his nearly 20-year career in construction project management. He had been a construction manager with an MNC in Singapore until February 2019 when he decided to focus fully on his final year project.

The native of Sitiawan, Perak, is ready to look for new job opportunities after the pandemic and has even set his sights on enrolling for the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) at WOU.

While contemplating his self-development, Venamurthy happened to see a huge WOU banner advertising the MBA-CM programme at the Regional Centre when driving around Ipoh. It led to him completing the Master's degree while undertaking projects in Sitiawan, Kuala Lumpur, Sarawak, Johor and Singapore. He is therefore thankful for the flexible study mode.

Due to his diploma in civil engineering, he qualified to study for MBA at WOU via Open Entry. "What I learnt from the MBA-CM will assist with my continuous development and my career," he said.



ENGINEER INSPIRES AS FIRST FROM HIS VILLAGE WITH MASTER'S DEGREE

Attaining an MBA degree in Construction Management means more than a simple career boost for **Mathew Dandi Anak Limbang**, 58, from Sibu. The achievement is a source of pride for him and his community as it fulfilled his dream to be “the first MBA holder in my kampung”.

Mathew, who has been with the civil service for more than 34 years, joined the Public Works Department in Kanowit, Sarawak, as senior assistant engineer in July 2020. “With an MBA, I will gain the respect of my junior staff. They are more likely to listen when I share my experiences and expertise.”

The MBA offers him great satisfaction as he had lacked the financial means to pursue further studies after his diploma. “With the knowledge from the MBA, I am better able to tell my colleagues how to improve the departmental delivery system,” he added.

He wants to give back to the community through social work when he retires. His job often required him to travel outstation for project inspections, and he always had to find the right balance for family, work and studies.

Mathew also has a Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Construction Management (BTCM) from WOU (2016) and a diploma in civil engineering.



NEWSMAN ENHANCES KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC POLICIES WITH CeMPA

Veteran journalist **Dorge Rajah**, 58, from Kuching has been the online editor and head of the Sarawak Tribune’s digital section since 2019. He has over 21 years of experience in media, previously heading the Borneo Post Online’s operations and, before that, the Borneo Post’s print editorial.

He graduated with a Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) degree. He holds a diploma in business studies. “In my line of work, government, politics, policies, programmes and people are part of the news/information we go through every day in selecting what news are to be published and what are to be prioritised,” he said.

“The process of attaining the degree has opened my mind as well as given me a better understanding of the due process of government, good governance, policies and the ‘why of what’,” he added. “It has made me more aware of the media as the Fourth Estate and how media/press can influence government as well as society.”

Dorge’s goal is to improve as an influencer and contribute to the society he lives in. He took up CeMPA because a paper qualification adds value and he owed it to himself to “get qualified and be qualified”.



RETIREMENT SPURS BANKER TO VENTURE INTO LECTURING

Before his retirement, **Kamil Hadi Mahammed Hassan**, 63, worked in the domestic banking sector as a manager/senior manager for 27 years, handling various banking operations. His career however was far from over. His continued aspiration to use his experience and credentials to teach inspired him to further his education.

He recently became a proud recipient of the Master of Education degree, with specialisation in Education Management. He also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from WOU (2014). His other credentials are a Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) from Universiti Utara Malaysia and a diploma in banking studies.

Kamil Hadi, who hails from Batu Caves in Selangor found the MEd curriculum suitable for his future aspiration to “become a lecturer or tutor, either full-time or part-time”.

REMINISCING ON THEIR UNDERGRADUATE STUDY ASPIRATIONS

Six bachelor's degree graduates who participated in WOU's virtual graduation on 28 November 2020 recall the adversity, triumphs and hopes of their memorable experiences.



PSYCHOLOGY DEGREE PROVES A GREAT STEPPING STONE IN CAREER

When **Kang Tan Hooi Ling** took up the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology (BAPS) programme at WOU, she was overjoyed that she could follow the programme even while working overseas in China.

The 46-year-old from Ayer Itam, Penang, now works as head of operations at Tact Worldwide, a training consulting firm. The BAPS degree she attained offers a good stepping stone to building a career in training and education. "My goal is to get a Master's degree, along with a professional accreditation in training and development," she shared.

Kang has some 20 years of teaching experience, having worked as a teaching assistant at a local kindergarten and lecturing IELTS and Practical English courses at one of China's largest training schools. She used to counsel students suffering from stress and those embarking on studies overseas, and has also conducted soft skills training and team building workshops for corporations while in China.



SEEKING TO FLY HIGH WITH MANAGEMENT CAREER

Joanne Liew Wee Wen, 32, made the bold decision to immediately enrol in the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) programme at WOU, just after graduating with a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Management (BBMG) degree.

The native of Kuching is confident that the knowledge and skills gained through both degrees as well as her work experience will help advance her career. "I can lean on the professional connections among fellow students for support and advice to further improve my management capabilities and solve difficult issues."

Liew has a challenging and promising career. She works as a senior group manager under Partnership Business with Affin Hwang Asset Management Bhd. She joined the company in June 2010, and is responsible for group sales, new accounts, revenue and assets under management.



LOOKING TO SCALE NEW HEIGHTS IN CONSTRUCTION

At the wise age of 60, **Chin Chek Wah**, an accomplished project manager with a local property developer in Johor is thrilled to graduate with a Bachelor of Technology (Honours) degree in Construction Management (BTCM). He chose BTCM because the courses cover all aspects of construction, from development to the handing-over stage, which are relevant to his daily work.

He was happy to be able to fulfil his dream of tertiary education while juggling work and family, due to the weekend tutorials and flexible pace of study. "What I learnt while at WOU has made me more resourceful in dealing with the problems and challenges at work. All these will help advance my work and career," he said.

His journey in education does not end here. "I am looking forward to continue my Master's programme when the Covid-19 pandemic is over."

LOGISTICS MAN DRIVEN TO FULFIL PROFESSIONAL GOAL

Logistics has been **Pratish Chandra Sekaran**'s passion for the last 10 years during which he changed three jobs but remained in the same field. He believes that there is a high demand for logistics skills, and hence bright job prospects.

The 29-year-old from Pasir Gudang, Johor, has found the Bachelor of Business (Honours) degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (BBLC) to be a boon. It has provided him with "contemporary knowledge central to the logistics and supply chain management industry", he said, stressing that it has empowered him with a rewarding career.

Pratish had enrolled in the BBLC via Open Entry in January 2013. He started working at age 19 as a logistics assistant with Wilmar Natural Oleochemicals where he took the advice of his superiors to pursue tertiary education to develop his skills. He has been working as an APAC logistics coordinator with Molnlycke Health Care since 2018.

Pratish is currently exploring his options for a Master's degree at WOU. His ultimate aim is to distinguish himself in logistics and supply chain through his expertise and climb up the managerial ladder to the position of chief operating officer.



CLIMBING THE FINANCIAL LADDER WITH PASSION

Rochelle Goh Hui Mian, 26, a projects executive in Kuching, was encouraged by a colleague who was pursuing his Master's degree at WOU to further her own studies. She had joined the company some six years ago immediately after obtaining her diploma in business administration.

Goh chose WOU's Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Finance (BBIF), thinking that it would help open up employment opportunities for her in the banking and financial sector. She has not looked back since.

The learning at WOU has enabled her to understand her job tasks better, to be more analytical and to solve problems, for improved job performance. She is therefore happy that she stepped out of her comfort zone to finally attain the BBIF.

She now aspires to gain more knowledge and work experience in the financial and investment sector, so as to become a competent financial planner who can assist in financial and investment planning.



MEMORIES OF CAMPUS LIFE BRIGHTEN YOUTH'S AMBITIONS

While studying at WOU's Penang campus, **Calvin Chew Chin Chai**, 23, held three part-time jobs, and despite the pressure excelled in his studies and co-curricular activities during his on-campus learning (OCL) years. "Visualising in my mind the goal to set up my own business sustained me during those trying times, along with the moral support of family and friends," he recalled.

For the lad from Jelutong, the Bachelor of Business (Honours) degree in Management (BBMG) that he has earned is the first step towards his goal of becoming a manager or creating his own venture. He plans to work for a few years and then enrol in CeMBA at WOU, so that he can advance to fulfil his ambitions.

His elder brother, Chin Quan had also studied for the BBMG and was among WOU's pioneer batch of OCL graduates. It was this that influenced Calvin to follow suit.

Chew, who works as a recruiter at NCS Global Technology Sdn Bhd, remembers enjoying the camaraderie of his classmates and the beautiful beach by the campus where he often went to relax.



HISTORIC VIRTUAL CEREMONY SEES **684 PROUD GRADUATES** BEING ROLLED OUT

Wawasan Open University



▲ Chancellor Tunku Imran conferred degrees via a virtual graduation.



▲ Pro-Chancellor Dato' Dr Lim Thuang Seng urged graduates to have a vision for the future.



▲ Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon mentioned WOU's commitment to lifelong learning.



▲ Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan spoke of efforts to produce talents for the new economy.

The University's 11th convocation ceremony turned out to be a significant and memorable occasion in more ways than one when a total of 684 graduates accepted their new credentials in absentia recently.

The event on 28 November 2020 marked the first time WOU held a fully virtual graduation affair, due to the global pandemic that restricted physical assembly. There was no in-person ceremony at the main campus in Penang, as is normally done. In view of Covid-19 and the conditional movement control order (CMCO) in force, the graduates made do with the virtual celebration.

There was no walking up on stage to collect the scrolls or names being called aloud in the traditional manner. There was no photographer to capture the special moment, and no opportunity to take keepsake snapshots in full academic regalia with fellow course mates, friends and family.

No matter the circumstances, it was still a significant milestone for the graduates and a happy climax to their inspiring and challenging journey with WOU. Many of them completed their final year of study and/or project during months that saw the country under full and partial lockdowns.

Of the total 684 graduates, 614 were from open distance learning (ODL) programmes. Of these, 500 had successfully completed their undergraduate programmes and 114 received postgraduate qualifications. Among the ODL undergraduates were the inaugural batch of 56 who received the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE).

The remaining 70 graduates were from the various on-campus learning (OCL) bachelor's degree programmes.

Hailing from across the country, the graduates ranged in age from 21 to 72 years, with females representing 61.4% and males 38.6%. Among those who received their credentials virtually were directors, HR staff, lecturers, principals and teachers, accounting employees, managers (for marketing, supply chains, projects, factories, sales, etc), engineers, IT executives, technicians, clerks, flight attendants and police force personnel.

In compliance with the SOPs of the CMCO, WOU Chancellor Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar symbolically conferred the diplomas and degrees in absentia during his address. A commemorative video with all the speeches and list of graduates was uploaded onto WOU's corporate website, social media platforms and its student portal to mark the occasion. It was also made available to all the graduates.

"I am proud to see the University taking steps to weather the storm, adapt and adjust, and continue delivering quality higher education to students through its virtual learning platforms," said Tunku Imran in his congratulatory remarks.

"The way forward for education is certainly changing. Lifelong learning and a transformation from the conventional brick-and-mortar mode to online forms of delivery is becoming the new reality."

Pro-Chancellor Dato' Dr Lim Thuang Seng shared the University's aspiration for the graduates to "have a vision for the future, an understanding of global development, and a knowledge of current market trends". "The future global economy will become more and more driven by new products utilising innovative Internet-related technologies and I believe the training you have received at WOU will help you to face some of these challenges," he said.

Meanwhile, Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon highlighted the history of WOU and the great leaders behind its establishment and growth. "I trust that, after your WOU experience, you have become committed lifelong learners, interested in more knowledge and skills, open to new ideas and possibilities, and ready for trials and challenges ahead, while leading a fruitful and meaningful life for yourself, your family and the society," he told the graduates.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan lauded the students for graduating in the current formidable times. She emphasised that it adds more meaning, significance and a deeper sense of achievement to their study journey with WOU.

She touched on the problem of graduate-mismatch in the Malaysian labour market. She said tackling this has been a key focus in the University's effort by ensuring that graduates possess talents which can be fully maximised in the new world economy. She stressed that it is the University's aim to impart all graduates with "adaptability and flexibility, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, leadership and lifelong learning".

"I would like to encourage all of you graduating today to seize whatever opportunities that come your way," she exhorted. "Do not expect a return to the world we had known just a year ago. So, I urge you to re-equip yourself constantly in areas that will benefit companies and the nation.

"As we inhabit a new reality, mark this chapter in your personal life-book that will tell the story of how you overcame adversity and prevailed."



▲ Lights, camera, action - Prof Chan in the midst of the shooting.



▲ Tan Sri Koh recording his speech for the e-graduation.

PIONEER CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DIPLOMA HOLDERS BRING SHINE TO GRADUATION

WOU's 11th e-graduation on 28 November 2020 included an inaugural batch of 56 graduates from the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme. Three of the recipients share with WawasanLink how it has improved their teaching and enhanced their credentials, while fulfilling the Ministry of Education's directive for all preschool operators and educators to possess a diploma.



TING SIEW KHIM was a flight stewardess with Singapore Airlines for 11 years before she stopped when she had her first baby. Being inactive and unfamiliar with the work environment in her hometown of Ipoh, she decided to set up a childcare centre there in 2003 as a source of income and to take care of her child.

Today, the 51-year-old is not only the principal of Taska Little Sweet Pea and the Tadika Pelita Maju kindergarten which began in 2016, but also a proud holder of the DECE. She has even enrolled in the Master of Education programme, specialising in Education Management, via APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) at WOU.

Her hope is to see society giving due respect to early childhood education providers as qualified and trained teachers. The DECE knowledge has come handy in improving the operations and teaching methods at her centres.

"It was tough to juggle between children, studies and operating two centres," she said. "I had the support and help of the WOU staff, who made time to listen and solve the problems. This makes learning relaxing and fun."

ESTHER TAN YEAN MEAN, 48, from Bayan Lepas, Penang, has a unique occupation as a music and movement educator at Loh Guan Lye Specialists Centre since 2012. She provides music and imagery, and therapeutic education rehabilitation services.

She registered for DECE in January 2017, using her SPM qualification for regular entry. She said that she took the programme "to better understand early childhood education in Malaysia in order to help my clients/patients who come under my care".

She found the programme structure and campus environment satisfying, while the flexible timetable suited her schedule perfectly.



SHARLY JOSING from Kuching said that the DECE has allowed her to upgrade herself professionally and qualify as a preschool educator, reassuring her of a secure teaching job. The 52-year-old Sarawakian has been an assistant teacher with Lodge Kindergarten since 2003. She teaches children aged 3 to 6 years.

Most importantly, the programme has equipped her to be a better teacher. "I learnt various aspects of child development," she said. "It really helped to develop my knowledge, attitude and skills in working with young children."

The preschool educator had enrolled via APEL for the July 2017 intake. With the open distance learning mode at WOU, she could continue to work full-time while pursuing her studies. "It is a privilege to get a diploma from a recognised university. The fees are reasonable compared to other universities," she added.

She aspires to use her professional skills to nurture the young into responsible, competent learners. "As a preschool teacher, it is my job to set the tone in the classroom, building a warm environment, mentoring and nurturing students. It is a rewarding profession and I feel gratified whenever I see my students progressing in their performances, and learning to appreciate the world around them."



WOU'S ACCOUNTING DEGREE GIVES TRIO SWIFT PATH TO CIMA QUALIFICATION



▲ Hannah Lim with hubby and son.



▲ Lo Pooi Yen



▲ Yeong Hui Mun

Three Accounting graduates of WOU recently passed the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants' (CIMA) A-Star programme, giving their careers richly-deserved impetus to advance further in the field.

It was in fact the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting (BBAC) degree that they earned at the University which accelerated their study pathway towards the CIMA A-Star qualification. This is a fast-track option offered to high achievers to become Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) designation holders.

The trio only needed to sit for one final paper, Strategic Case Study. This shortened the duration needed to earn the CIMA A-Star qualification and saved them on exam fees.

The successful graduates - all Penangites - are Hannah Lim Phei Wen, 29, from Simpang Ampat; Lo Pooi Yen, 42 from Ayer Itam; and Yeong Hui Mun, 25, from Jelutong.

Lim and Lo, who took the BBAC programme via open distance learning, recently graduated in November 2020, while Yeong, from the on-campus learning programme, graduated in December 2019.

HANNAH LIM passed her CIMA exam while caring for her baby. She was motivated by the desire to attain her professional goals and often repeated a simple quote to herself: "If you think you can, you can." Recognising that an intelligent interpretation of accounting data is vital for decision-making, she aims to become a qualified professional accountant and use her skills to boost her company's growth.

She is also able to rely on her knowledge and skills from the BBAC to grasp the implications of financial statements. She believes that the CIMA credential and work experience combined will broaden her future employment opportunities.

Lim has accumulated 10 years of experience in accounting and tax-related work, and is now an assistant accounts manager with Century Integrated Sdn Bhd since mid-September 2020.

LO POOIYEN, an assistant manager at Texchem Resources Bhd, is focused on climbing the proverbial ladder to become a qualified globally recognised accountant.

"BBAC equipped me with accounting, management and business knowledge, and facilitated my pursuit of the CIMA A-Star programme," he said. "With the CIMA credential, I am now part of a global professional community that enables me to thrive in today's rapidly evolving workplace."

Lo called on learners to always persist irrespective of age. "Never give up and take action to achieve your dreams."

YEONG HUI MUN, a finance analyst with a multinational company in Bayan Lepas, appreciates the WOU-CIMA collaboration which saw her pass the CIMA A-Star programme. "This CIMA credential increases my future prospects, and it has also boosted my confidence to continue along this career path," she said.

"What I learnt from BBAC helps me to better understand how financial statements can be used to measure a company's performance," she added. "This degree, together with my work experience, will serve to advance my career as a finance analyst so that I can add value to my company."

Yeong had enrolled at WOU with a diploma in financial analysis. She is grateful for the University scholarship that covered part of her tuition fees and the wonderful ambience at the seaside campus.

She aspires to become a seasoned finance analyst and undertake projects to support her company's strategic planning.

MECHATRONICS A KEY TO INNOVATION AND RECOVERY FROM PANDEMIC



◀ Dr Teoh supervises the Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronics programme.

The use of mechatronics in industries plays an important role in economic recovery, especially in helping companies to increase productivity in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Effectively, mechatronics can create technology that replaces humans for tasks that are dangerous, repetitive or require higher efficiency.

Dr Teoh Ping Chow, Deputy Dean (Industry & Outreach) of WOU's School of Science & Technology (SST), pointed out that many employers are still hesitant to adopt mechatronics due to the high investment costs.

Indeed, the new normal has led to reduced workforce, staggered production, drop in productivity, slower supply chain and increase in operating costs. In this light, the key to economic recovery is increased productivity, with mechatronics playing an important role, Dr Teoh said.

"The biggest role of mechatronics is to provide innovation to increase productivity using the same resources, and thus being the driving force in economic recovery," he stressed.

Dr Teoh was speaking during an online talk on *Mechatronics' Role in Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic*, organised by the School in collaboration with the Penang Regional Centre (PGRC) on 13 December 2020.

He highlighted that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) which involves the automation of data, processes and physical movements to speed up production, is very much related to mechatronics. He said the implementation of IR 4.0 will see "a demand for multidisciplinary skilled workers with knowledge of electronics, software and mechanical, all of which mechatronics provides".

Responding to a question, he added that the pandemic has created a mindset shift among employers, with many now moving to achieve IR 4.0 and wanting workers with knowledge outside their own fields. Hence, mechatronics graduates are expected to be in high demand.

CREATIVITY NEEDED FOR LOGISTICS, SUPPLY CHAIN FIRMS TO RISE ABOVE DISRUPTIONS

Among the industries that particularly need innovations to ensure continued smooth operations is the logistics and supply chain industry. The pandemic has disrupted the movement of goods in the global supply chain due to issues like lockdowns, restrictions, shutdown of businesses, closed borders and quarantines.

WOU's School of Business & Administration (SBA) lecturer Dr Kan Wen Huey urged logistics companies to think creatively and build their business models to improve efficiency.

Speaking at an online talk on *Impact of Covid-19 on the Logistics and Supply Chain Industry and Malaysia's Response* organised by PGRC in collaboration with the School on 12 December 2020, she highlighted the major tribulations faced by the industry.

These include the rise in e-commerce, new factory environments forced by social distancing, and restrictions on movements of goods due to increased border controls. She said these factors lead to longer waiting times for overseas parcels and delayed delivery. Dr Kan expects this scenario to continue into 2021, with a continued increase in freight rates because of restrictions on the global movement of goods.

The future for logistics, she stressed, is in digital transformation with IR 4.0, supply chain diversification and onshoring of production.

She offered a few ideas on actions logistics companies can take, like using integrated logistics control towers for real-time monitoring of freight; knowing their inventory and capability so as to balance supply and demand; effective proactive communication with on-site and remote workers, suppliers, carriers and customers; and providing physical and mental support to the logistics workforce.



◀ Dr Kan is the Programme lead for Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Logistics and Supply Chain Management at WOU.

ENLIGHTENING TALK ON FIXED-TERM EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

The Industrial Court often decides and awards against errant companies that disguise permanent employment as fixed-term employment contract (FTC), since this robs the employee of job security and termination benefits.

WOU's School of Business & Administration (SBA) Senior Lecturer Muniswar Munisamy shared several industrial cases of non-renewal and premature termination of FTC at a webinar on *Law on Fixed Term Contract and Practice* organised by SBA on 5 December 2020.

He explained that genuine FTCs are for temporary one-off jobs, seasonal work, to fill gaps caused by temporary absence of a permanent staff and for specific tasks/research. An employer can engage the employee for a fixed-term and not be obliged to extend the contract upon expiry. However, the employer cannot keep renewing the FTC for an indefinite period - except for those over 60.

He said that if an employee's services are required for ongoing work, he must be engaged in ordinary employment. He cited the case of 35 teachers at Han Chiang High School who had been working for over 20 years on a fixed-term basis. Their contract was not renewed when they formed a union. The Industrial Court ruled that their dismissal was without just cause or excuse, and ordered reinstatement, because their permanent jobs were dressed up as FTCs.

Muniswar also discussed the doctrine of legitimate expectation. He shared about a varsity's non-renewal of a contract professor who had uprooted himself and his family from Penang to come to Kuala Lumpur to work. The professor claimed that the deputy vice-chancellor had implied a permanent tenure when he was appointed. The High Court ruled that the professor had a legitimate expectation for continued employment and awarded him compensation accordingly.

Another case was of a sub-editor on a one-year contract who had his FTC extended twice but not renewed upon expiry of his third contract. The Court accepted that the genuine FTC came to an end automatically, since the company did not lead him to believe otherwise.

He explained that the Court awards fixed compensation for the premature termination of a FTC based on the remuneration a claimant would have earned for the contract's unexpired period. He further stated that a workman on FTC enjoys security of tenure for the duration of the contract and as such may only be terminated earlier based on just cause



▲ Muniswar has vast experience in dealing with human resource issues.

or excuse - such as serious misconduct, poor performance or redundancy.

He also conceded that a FTC can be used to assess the suitability of an employee for permanent employment, like the case of a Pos Laju clerk whose one-year contract was not renewed due to unsatisfactory work. The court ruling here established that the employer can use performance appraisal to decide on the status of a FTC employee.

Touching on foreign workers, Muniswar said they are all employed on FTC. He cited cases in which wages were awarded for the unexpired period of the contract during premature termination.

Answering questions, he stressed that the break between fixed-term contracts must be at least 31 days if the employer wants to avoid paying termination benefits, while for those above 60 no breaks are necessary.

He said an employer cannot keep renewing the FTC without legal consequences, and that FTC employees have the same rights to rest days, annual leave, medical leave, public holidays, EPF, Socso and due notifications before termination.

BRINGING THE WONDER OF COMPUTATIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO OUR REAL WORLD

Picture in your mind the following three technologies.

First, a high-powered remote-controlled robot that can dismantle bombs, detect gas leakage, pull cars, enter buildings, break open doors and help remove potential hostages. Second, a virtual fire environment for simulation training of firefighters. And the third, a 'Reconfigurable Driver Simulator' for the Australian army to train drivers for realistic vehicle motion.

These are among a few commercial-ready products that the Institute for Intelligent Systems Research and Innovation (IISRI) of Deakin University, Australia, has developed using robotics, haptics and human-machine interface (HMI). They are sold through Deakin's three start-up companies.

They were cited by Prof Lim Chee Peng, Professor of Complex Systems at IISRI, as examples of how computational intelligence (CI) is impacting the real-world to improve efficiency and solve some of the problems in the work environment. He illustrated them in his online public talk on *Intelligent Computational Technologies in the Era of Industry 4.0: What Is and What Is Not* on 6 November 2020. The event was organised by WOU's School of Science & Technology.

Prof Lim gave an enlightening explanation on CI, artificial intelligence (AI), big data and machine learning, along with the related principles, architecture and real-world applications.

He defined CI as an intelligent algorithm/machine which can extract information from data using a pattern-recognition technique. While AI is about the study of machines that have some qualities of human intelligence, CI deals only with numerical data and does not use knowledge in the AI sense.

CI relies on neural networks, fuzzy logic and evolutionary algorithms to design intelligent systems. He said that CI can design intelligent machines with high-level reasoning and decision-making - such as switching off the heater when the temperature is high.

Prof Lim also shared four real-world applications of CI based on his work with students over the last 20 years. The first was a power generation plant that captured temperature and pressure of a condenser circulating water from various sensor points to deduce any blockages in outlets so as to facilitate early maintenance or fault detection.



◀ Prof Lim is excited about the many real-world applications of computational intelligence and the benefits to users.

Another project involved the capture of 30,000 signals every 10 minutes for each of the 78 trains on the Sydney network. It helped to monitor the operations of the brake, air con, cabin doors and other features, using the data collected for predictive maintenance and servicing.

Prof Lim has also applied the fuzzy model framework in Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (FMEA) in factories, as well as in the bird nest industry. This was to help the industry gain more structure in its processes and improve the quality of processing to meet ISO standards.

A further application was in a multi-objective scheduling project for the furniture industry where the aim was to devise an optimal schedule for cost-savings, tardiness and earliness of the production floor.

Answering questions after his presentation, Prof Lim spoke about Deakin's teleoperation works, such as surgical robots able to perform surgery from long distances, and remote scanning of patients for non-contact screening.

On the application of machine learning (ML) in the factory environment, he said both ML and CI involve algorithms and learning from data. They are yet to become turn-key technologies and the algorithm needs to be fine-tuned to solve specific problems.

SCHOLARSHIP TO DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN MEMORY OF LATE STAFF

Three WOU on-campus learning students from the May 2020 intake became recipients of the Lim Yeang See (LYS) Scholarship award, worth up to RM30,000 each.

The scholarship was initiated in memory of Lim, a senior staff at WOU who passed away in December 2018, by her niece Vivian Lee Chooi Gaik. Lim had joined WOU in mid-2006 while the institution was in the midst of preparing for its formal establishment. She was attached to the Marketing Department and had served the University for more than 12 years.

The LYS grant provides full scholarship covering tuition fees for three deserving and eligible full-time undergraduate students.



▲ Vethe Marthineeh Mogan



▲ Navina Sundaram

Recipient **Vethe Marthineeh Mogan**, 23, from Relau, Penang, is thankful as her family struggles to cover their financial expenses. Her mother is a teacher at an international preschool while her brother works as a web developer.

She is pursuing the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (BBLC) degree. She holds a Diploma in Information Technology (Programming) from Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin. She looks forward to a rewarding career as a data analyst in the in-demand logistics and supply chain management sector.

Her brother recommended WOU to her after hearing good reviews from his friend, a former student. With her financial worries now resolved by the scholarship, she can focus on expanding her talents and career opportunities.

Another recipient, **Yugtheyswar Thirugnanam**, 23, from Bukit Mertajam, also enrolled for BBLC, with a Diploma in Business Management from a private institution.

His father, the family's sole breadwinner, passed away in February 2020, leaving him with his mum, an elder brother searching for employment and a younger brother in secondary school.

A friend from the BBLC programme had urged him to enrol at WOU. "I chose BBLC because of my interest in planning, organising and managing, and because I want to gain more knowledge, excel and become a leader in this field," he said.

He cannot wait to graduate and land a good job that allows him to take care of his family. "I am motivated to do well so that I change my family's circumstances and provide for them," he said in earnest.

Lastly, **Navina Sundaram**, 24, from Bukit Mertajam, found the scholarship to be a timely godsend. Her father, a lorry foreman, earns just enough for food and rent. She also lives with her mum, a homemaker, and a younger brother.

"With the scholarship, I am able to avoid costly student loans that will take years to repay," she said. Navina is enrolled in the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Management (BBMG) programme and has a Foundation in Management from a private university.

Besides lightening her burden, the scholarship has also inspired her to help others. "I can apply my talents to help my organisation to address its strengths and weaknesses, and to undertake its responsibilities to employees and the community," she said.

She expects the programme to give her a broader understanding of the operations of companies, including finance and human resources. Her goal is to gain as much business insight from her studies and scale her way up professionally to secure a top managerial position or set up her own enterprise.

GRADUATE IN PRIZE-WINNING TEAM GIVES BACK TO HER ALMA MATER

As a student at WOU, Chee Siew Chean had spent countless hours studying and revising at the University's library. Indeed, the library environment became a second home for her, leading to her graduating with the MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM) degree.

Chee, who participated in WOU's virtual graduation on 28 November 2020, was inspired recently to donate to her alma mater, specifically to the library that had provided her much-needed academic shelter. "Giving back to WOU is the best way to appreciate and thank all of them," the 41-year-old from Bayan Lepas said of those who supported and encouraged her.

In presenting RM1,000 cash to the WOU library, Chee said she had no hesitation in donating her share of a prize money to the very University responsible for her academic success.

The prize was for a research paper titled *Factors Affecting the Implementation of Industry 4.0 in Manufacturing Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)* that she had jointly produced with WOU's School of Science & Technology Deputy Dean (Industry & Outreach) Dr Teoh Ping Chow, along with Universiti Sains Malaysia lecturer Dr Teh Sin Yin and student Ng Wei Chien.

The findings were presented at the Industry 4.0 Regional Conference (i4RC2020) on *Synergising AI, Engineering and Economy towards I4.0* in September 2020. They won the Best Paper Award (RM1,000 prize) and the Best Impact Paper Award (RM3,000) out of 66 papers presented in the 'Business & Operations' category.



Chee, who obtained her Bachelor of Science (Environment Engineering) from Universiti Malaya in 2005, has been working in the engineering field for 15 years. She is currently a lead engineer at a multinational company. She liked the flexibility of open distance learning at WOU since she is a working mum. She said: "Never stop learning, if you want to never stop growing in life."

She also acknowledged that she was able to apply what she learnt from the various courses under MBA-MPM to her job. "They are relevant to the real-world. The tutors related real-life examples and factual case studies when teaching, and are professional, experienced and patient."

Contact Us

MAIN CAMPUS

Wawasan Open University
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah,
10050 Penang, Malaysia.
Tel: 04-218 0333
Fax: 04-226 9323

WOU Regional and Support Centres

Open Tuesday to Sunday:
10.00am - 7.00pm

Penang Regional Centre

54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah,
10050 Penang, Malaysia.
Tel: 04-218 0133/4
Fax: 04-228 4500

Ipoh Regional Centre

Wisma Gerakan,
80 Persiaran Greenhill,
30450 Ipoh, Perak.
Tel: 05-242 6323 / 243 6323
Fax: 05-254 9323

Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre

Level 3 Menara PGRM,
8 Jalan Pudu Ulu,
56100 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.
Tel: 03-9281 7323 / 9283 8323
Fax: 03-9284 9323

Bandar Utama Regional Support Centre

L2-6 & 7, Wisma BU8,
11, Lebuhr Bandar Utama,
Bandar Utama,
47800 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor.
Tel: 03-7629 7223 / 7629 7123
Fax: 03-7629 7023

Johor Bahru Regional Centre

48, Jalan Pertama 1
Pusat Perdagangan
Danga Utama,
81300 Skudai, Johor
Tel: 07-5624875

Kuching Regional Centre

14 Westin Avenue,
Jalan Tun Jugah,
93350 Kuching, Sarawak.
Tel: 082-578 923
Fax: 082-576 923

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Email us at enquiry@wou.edu.my | For more details, visit wou.edu.my | Call Toll-free 1-300-888-968 (WOU) | ☎ 019-474 9323