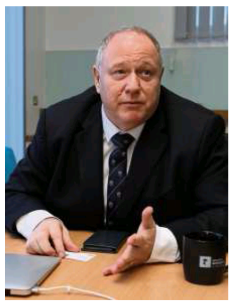
Teaching grads to thrive amid change





(Above) Prof Kendall says UNM wants students to have a lifelong learning goal. (Left pic) UNM students are privileged to study at a gorgeous campus in Semenyih where they get the best of British-style education with a focus on personal development.

CHANGE is inevitable. Given the fast pace of technological advancements, even as the boundaries between physical and digital become increasingly blurred in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), it is only a matter of time before IR5.0 emerges.

"IR4.0 is merging the physical and digital worlds but we should not hitch all our programmes around it. Eventually, it will turn into IR5.0, where humans and automation work together and we'll playing catch up in two to three years," said University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM) chief executive officer and provost Prof Graham Kendall.

It is the reason why UNM focuses its programmes not only on enabling students to build a strong foundation in their chosen industry but also inculcating the love of lifelong learning.

Independent learning is also a key principle for the university. To obtain top grades in its marking scheme, for instance, students need to take the initiative to complete recommended readings and research to draw their own conclusions, instead of simply regurgitating what lecturers teach in classes.

Prof Kendall explained, "We do things in a different way as we're much more open to independent learning and measuring output instead of input when it comes to assessments.

"We want students to have a lifelong learning goal, with the ability to absorb knowledge to keep ahead of the game. It's about learning to learn.

"While we teach them key technical skills through our accredited courses, we also encourage them to engage in corporate social responsibility for the disadvantaged. We have around 70 to 80 student societies with a great range from woodwork to puppetry."

UNM creates an environment where students can push past their comfort zones to build up soft skills and confidence.

One way the university does this is through the Nottingham Advantage Award which encourages students to undertake activities outside their curriculum to enhance learning under the guidance of industry and academia.

Participation in the scheme is included in the degree transcript and students gain valuable experience that can be reflected in their resumes alongside personal development. All these increase their employability.

It is an approach that has yielded results. As the university celebrates 20 years of producing sought-after graduates with technical knowledge and soft skills to match, it boasts one of the highest graduate employment rates in Malaysia.

All-round development

Ranked among the top 100 universities in the world, the University of Nottingham is the first British university to set up a campus outside the United Kingdom and in Malaysia, offering the best of British education here.

It offers foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate courses delivered across 17 schools and departments, ranging from the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences to Engineering and Science.

Located on a beautiful landscaped 125-acre site in Semenyih, the university's campus is designed to reflect the University Park Campus in Nottingham and attracts students from 85 countries.

According to Prof Kendall, nearly 30% of the university's students hail from abroad, allowing Malaysia's next generation of leaders to broaden their minds by interacting with peers from myriad cultures.

As a result, studying at UNM merges the best of British-style education with a focus on personal development and international exposure.

Leading research

UNM is internationally renowned for spearheading impactful research with a particular focus on addressing the challenges facing Southeast Asia and around the world, which UNM has enhanced over the year.

In December 2017, for instance, UNM was awarded a five-star rating for its research and innovation quality, making it among the highest rated international universities in the Malaysia Research Assessment.

Research assessment

In recent years, it has also received various research grants from sources across the globe, with its latest being phase three of the human-elephant conflict project worth RM1.3mil and sustainable palm oil research, facilitated by Malaysia's strategic geographic location and biodiversity.

"In Malaysia, we can do research that we can't do in the UK. We're rightly proud of that.

"We've just signed an extension with Yayasan Sime Darby on managing the human-elephant conflict.

"Working with other partners, we relocate elephants and put GPS trackers on them.This has led to other things like camera traps to discover new flora and fauna in the jungle.

"We also do research on sustainable palm oil. It's a massive industry for Malaysia."

Open Day

UNM will be organising an Open Day on March 14 (10am to 4pm), which will enable prospective students to get a feel of the university and learn more about available courses. To find out more, visit nottingham.edu.my.



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