

Flying high in computer science

EVERY profession has its challenges, and so does Mohd Khairul Hairi Mazlan's. Developing apps, software and coding are no easy tasks, but Mohd Khairul is passionate about changing lives. By creating apps and software, he aims to help companies run their businesses smoothly.

"Every day is a challenge. My job is to solve issues. No problem is too big or too little. The satisfaction you get from solving difficulties has positively influenced the lives of others, especially mine," he says.

He is the head of development and operations under Group Strategy and Innovations for MNRB Holdings Bhd. He oversees the development and operations for new group digital initiatives to drive the growth of companies under MNRB via digital innovation.

Mohd Khairul says he must always be on his toes and ahead of the latest technology since most industries are moving online.

"We must improve our work processes through automation in all our operations. We are currently working on the first API-driven hi-tech web mobile for insurance companies in Malaysia. We created the software and coding to hub all client information on a single app. We customise

the app according to the needs of our clients.

"Creating something that impacts the customers' businesses positively is our satisfaction. It was much harder for insurance companies without an app to promote their products. We hope to create awareness among these companies to take their services online. Our goal is to create user-friendly applications, and develop platforms to protect the intellectual property (IP) of our clients," he says.

Mohd Khairul has a plethora of knowledge and expertise in this field. Engineering and computing innovative development are his passions. His hard work has taken him from humble beginnings to success. He is also a man with ambitions that are set to inspire others.

He graduated with a Bachelor in Computer Science (Hons) degree from the Faculty of Information Sciences and Engineering in 2012 and progressed to pursue a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the Graduate School of Management (GSM), graduating in 2018.

His most notable accomplishment was receiving the industrial award for his final-year bachelor's degree project at Management and Science University's (MSU) 12th convocation ceremony in January 2012.

"MSU has been very helpful and exposed me to various cultures. This is a good place to learn for its lecturers.

"That is when I began grooming myself. We had friendly lecturers who were willing to teach us and the fruits of it are the successful alumni we have now," he says.

Behind every success is a story of failures, the ones that break or make men. It was the failure in excelling in his academics that moulded and boosted Mohd Khairul to perform well in other aspects of his life. It was the beginning of an amazing journey.



Mohd Khairul says, "MSU has been very helpful and exposed me to various cultures."

"I never performed well in my previous studies, and I dropped out, but MSU turned me into a success, and the younger generation needs to know that they can be anybody they want to be if they work for it.

"My final-year project was programming with Prof Datuk Dr Md Gapar Md Johar (who is currently MSU's senior vice-president for research, innovation, technology and systems) and he was extremely open to recommendations. I could get complete hands-on supervision from him, and he was prepared to spend additional time to ensure our projects were successful," he says.

On tips for the younger generation, Mohd Khairul says, "They have to believe in the university itself and then themselves and

"MSU turned me into a success, and the younger generation needs to know that they can be anybody they want to be if they work for it."

Mohd Khairul Hairi Mazlan

trust the journey, learn as much as you can at MSU."

A known name in higher education, MSU promotes excellence and advanced quality education, with a culture of industry and entrepreneurship embedded with an ecosystem of research, innovation and technology.

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VC COLUMN

THE tragic deaths of two university students due to ruptured blood vessels in the head recently must serve as a wake-up call that goes beyond the higher education community. This is the time to remind ourselves that no matter what we are going through, our personal well-being must come first. Stress and worries should not be allowed to bring us down or worse, harm us physically.

In the higher education context, the pandemic has triggered incredible changes in teaching and learning. Classes and exams have transitioned entirely online, not just at Open University Malaysia (OUM) but in many schools, colleges and universities around the world.

While this has allowed millions to continue studying despite lockdowns and quarantines, the sudden and near universal adoption of online learning has not been without repercussions.

OUM's counselling psychology expert Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Tajudin Md Ninggal has discovered evidence to support this statement. In a research study involving new university students, he found that both male and female students experienced moderately high levels of emotional instability. They reported feeling anxious and lacking in self-confidence while studying from home.

Other studies have also shown that students face difficulties concentrating on their studies and maintaining mental health. Long-term isolation arising from online learning during the pandemic can have severe consequences, and the impact on their mental health is already extremely concerning.

Having said that, I am glad that many of our learners are adapting well to the

Make mental health a priority



OUM has steps in place to assist learners who are struggling with long-term isolation arising from online learning.

current situation.

PhD (Arts) candidate Ch'ng Hui Lin says her personal experience has been largely positive. She shares, "OUM's online tools have allowed me to hold frequent discussions with my supervisor. My lecturers have also been very helpful in the writing of my thesis. I have continued to be productive without losing anything in terms of the quality of education and support I normally get from OUM."

Murina Rose Pawanteh, also a PhD (Arts)

candidate, admits, "Shifting from conventional to online learning has been a big burden on my shoulders. Being confined at home without any physical consultation, discussion or research is stressful, but the way I see it, we might as well learn to embrace this challenge and move forward."

We are glad that learners like Ch'ng and Murina are coping well with the current situation. But for others who may be struggling, we would like to stress that you are not alone.

By **PROF DATUK DR MANSOR FADZIL**



Through the Centre for Learner Affairs (CLA), we routinely check on learners and assist them in applying coping strategies via workshops and sharing sessions. Any learner who needs counselling support on academic performance or even personal issues can also easily reach out to CLA for assistance.

Looking at the bigger picture, practising empathy is imperative right now. Let's try to put ourselves in other people's shoes, be they our friends, families, colleagues, or coursemates. They may be experiencing limitations and difficulties that we are not, so we must strive to be more understanding. Universities and lecturers need to do the same with learners.

Importantly, if you are facing problems, don't keep them to yourself. If you are experiencing pain, don't ignore it. Whether mental, emotional or physical, symptoms and conditions may indicate something far more serious, so don't brush them off as something minor.

Your education is precious, but your life should never be taken for granted.

■ Prof Datuk Dr Mansor Fadzil is president and vice-chancellor of OUM.

Training highly skilled bioscientists

THE coronavirus pandemic has genuinely exposed the vulnerability of our national pharmaceutical industry, which is still highly dependent on imports, especially for high-value, patented medicine such as the Covid-19 vaccines.

Multinational corporations, aka Big Pharma, from high-income countries such as the United States and from Europe, overwhelmingly dominate our market, accounting for RM3.9bil or 87% of the market share.

We are also lagging behind our neighbours in this aspect. For instance, several local industrial players in Thailand and Indonesia are ranked as leading pharmaceutical companies in their respective countries, whereas no local company is listed as one of the top companies in Malaysia.

Our over-reliance on Big Pharma is not the

most sustainable economic approach, with billions of ringgit of our national wealth flowing out with minimal domestic socio-economic developments.

Thus, there is an urgent need to build a self-reliant national pharmaceutical industry capable of manufacturing locally developed technologies to serve the nation's healthcare sector and expand our economic prospects through technology exportation.

Transforming the pharmaceutical sector is no small feat to take on and will require an excellent collaborative effort between different sectors, including higher education and healthcare, to face multifaceted challenges.

One of the critical challenges is to cultivate a strong research and development (R&D) culture in the biosciences field, which partly involves training an army of highly skilled bioscientists.

The Institute of Medical Science Technology (MESTECH), a branch institute of Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL), is at the forefront of this effort through its postgraduate programme, Master of Applied Bioscience. The master's programme is a two-year research-based degree in which students are given independence to conduct their research project, thus providing ample opportunity to cultivate technical skills and enhance their creativity in the field of biosciences.

The students will receive guidance and supervision from experts who have had extensive doctoral training at the world's best universities. The programme offers a diverse range of expertise in bioscience research, addressing a variety of important and exciting topics, such as parasite infections in the Orang Asli community, novel therapeutic compounds for glaucoma and cancer therapy, molecular pathogenesis in cancers and infectious diseases, regenerative biology in nerve and spinal cord injury, environmental health sciences, and more.

The uniqueness of this master's programme is that students will be exposed to a range of the latest technologies and techniques in the field of applied bioscience that will be useful for future graduate career development. By the end of the programme, the graduates will master critical biological techniques such as advanced cell culture, laboratory animal handling, bioinformatics, molecular biology, advanced microbiology, and genomic and proteomic analysis.

In addition, the students will also gain exposure to transdisciplinary research through close collaboration with industries

and other research institutes such as the Institut Penyelidikan Air Kebangsaan (NAHRIM), the Institute for Medical Research (IMR), and other universities.

Highly skilled bioscientists are vital in transforming the national pharmaceutical industry to become more self-reliant. Bioscientists are needed to serve as clinical researchers, biomedical scientists, pharmaceutical scientists, environmental health scientists, and regulatory scientists to create a conducive ecosystem for this much-needed transformative endeavor.

The Master of Applied Bioscience programme is specifically designed with this transformative agenda in mind. Join UniKL-MESTECH to be part of the transformation. – By Dr Muhammad Fauzi Daud, senior lecturer at UniKL-MESTECH.

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KPT/JPT(N/345/7/1090)12/2023 MOA/PSA11355
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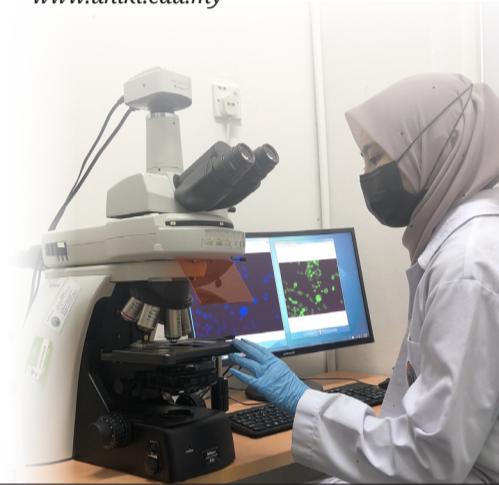
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Award-winning scientific research

AT Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC), applied science students are encouraged to conduct research projects that will have potential for practical use in industries.

Take for example, the recent research projects by the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FOAS) students which were sent for the Final Year Project & Postgraduate Poster Competition (FYPPPC) organised by MNNF Network last year on virtual platform.

This was an international event open to students from both private and public universities from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Poland, Jordan and India.

Eng Yi Lin, a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Food Science student and a gold award winner, explains her presentation.

"The main focus of this topic is on the limitation of the treatment of Type 2 diabetes mellitus. Most diabetic patients rely on insulin injection and hypoglycaemic drugs to maintain glucose homeostasis.

"Thus, this study was conducted to determine the chemical and bioactivity changes of cheese with the incorporation of cinnamon bark and twig aqueous extract, and the effects of *Lactobacillus plantarum* TAR4 on the physical, chemical, and bioactive properties of cinnamon-fortified cheese.

"This project provides insight on the use of cinnamon bark and cinnamon twig extract to improve post-digestion antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-diabetic properties of cheese. Fortification of functional ingredients in functional food is the current trend," she says.

Another gold award winner, Hew Shu Ying, who is a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Bioscience with Chemistry student,

conducted a research project on finding a potential probiotic for the local red tilapia.

"There are lots of commercial probiotic products available, but these do not achieve expected growth efficacy since the strains are not locally isolated and targeted specifically for local red tilapia.

"With a potential host-originated probiotic, it is expected to exert beneficial effects in targeted livestock more efficiently and in a more environmentally friendly method as compared to the use of antibiotics or chemicals, indirectly helping fish farmers in achieving economic sustainability through improvement in growth efficacy and food conversion ratio.

"The outcome of the project is that a potential strain is successfully isolated, characterised and can be further explored to be used as feed additive or directly administered to improve water quality in red tilapia freshwater aquaculture," she explains.

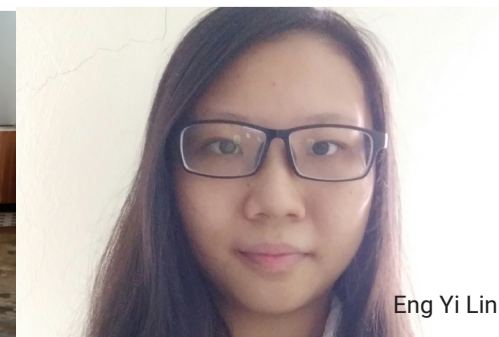
FOAS currently offers applied science programmes ranging from diploma to postgraduate levels of study. Postgraduate programmes offered by FOAS are by research.

Prospective students are encouraged to apply online at www.tarc.edu.my. Attractive scholarships are also available at TAR UC on the basis of academic merit and sibling discount for qualified students.

■ Find out more about TAR UC's Applied Science programmes by visiting TAR UC's Virtual Open Day from Sept 20-24, 10am-5pm. Log on to <http://virtualopenday.tarc.edu.my> to register. Alternatively, call FOAS at 011-1075 8544, email foas@tarc.edu.my or visit www.tarc.edu.my/foas



Hew Shu Ying.



Eng Yi Lin.

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of our learners choose OUM because of the flexibility we offer (2021 Marketing Survey)

Take the lead in the field of nursing

A MASTER's degree is crucial for nurses to move forward in their profession, but this career comes with a demanding schedule that may put some off in getting a higher qualification.

However, the fully online Master of Nursing (MN) programme offered at Open University Malaysia (OUM) will make it easier for those wanting to pursue this postgraduate degree.

As the nation's leading open and distance learning (ODL) institution that leverages on state-of-the-art technology and facilities, OUM's fully online learning delivery will provide much-needed flexibility for busy in-service nurses to study and gain a competitive advantage without compromising their work or personal responsibilities.

Programme director Sharmiza Samsudin says, "The MN programme offers flexibility, which will assist in learners' professional development during this current pandemic. Thanks to the university's advanced approach to teaching and learning, the fully online mode will actually facilitate those who want to pursue the programme."

Sharmiza has over two decades of experience in the nursing field. She worked in the neonatal intensive care unit for nine years prior to joining a private university as a lecturer. To date, she has 17 years of experience in teaching at government institutions and private universities, bringing in her speciality in neonatal nursing to learners.

The MN programme aims to produce graduates who are prepared to function as knowledgeable leaders in nursing, make



The fully online Master of Nursing programme offered at OUM will make it easier for those wanting to pursue this postgraduate degree.

appropriate decisions, and communicate with colleagues and team members in inter-professional health.

Packaged at a competitive and affordable cost, and complemented with readily available e-books and other learning resources, learners will also enjoy an advanced-level study that particularly emphasises evidence-based practices within the subject of their specific nursing field.

"The programme will assist graduates to develop professionally and respond

effectively to challenges within a complex healthcare environment. They will also learn to apply the right knowledge to intervene and initiate change at the workplace for better patient outcomes and effective utilisation of scarce resources," says Sharmiza.

She admits that the pandemic has restricted face-to-face teaching and learning opportunities. Regardless, the programme has continued with lecturers delivering classes safely and effectively while simultaneously ensuring the integrity and continuity of the education process via online solutions. Consequently, learners are able to complete their courses and graduate on time.

"The majority of the fourth generation has

"The MN programme will assist graduates to develop professionally and respond effectively to challenges within a complex healthcare environment."

Sharmiza Samsudin


Internet access with satisfactory or good connection and a high level of information technology skills. OUM's e-learning approach is perfect for them, and can aid their studies," adds Sharmiza.


"As we move forward, we must keep in mind that the pandemic is still evolving, and healthcare providers must continue to provide high-quality care to all patients. In this context, OUM is prepared to assist and support our learners who also play a crucial role in their jobs as frontliners."

Obtaining a master's degree in nursing is not an easy feat. But anyone who wants to take on this challenge can rest assured that OUM provides the best in online learning that prepares you for a rewarding career in the field.

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ON a recent drive through my town, I passed a billboard that highlighted the importance of keeping track of our mental health, especially during the ongoing pandemic. This is such an important message and reminds us to think about the connection between our physical, mental, and spiritual health and well-being.

Well-being is a useful concept, probably more so than health, which we tend to narrowly frame in terms of going to see the doctor when we feel unwell. It invites us to think about how we feel, both physically and mentally. It draws that all-important link between the mind and the body and recognises that feelings in one will impact the other.

For example, on those weeks where I don't manage to keep up my exercise routine, I find myself feeling gloomy and lethargic. Similarly, if I feel stressed at home or at work, this usually manifests in all kinds of physical symptoms, such as headaches or back pain and so on.

It is important to situate our individual feelings and experiences in the environments within which we live and work. My previous research has looked at how neighbourhoods either enable or hinder good health and well-being. These prosper when we have access to green and spacious living environments, low levels of crime, we breathe good quality air, have access to shops with abundant fresh fruit and vegetables, can socialise with friends and neighbours, and go to good schools or empowering workplaces.

Covid-19 has challenged a lot of this. In the highest of restrictions, we've been confined to homes, with very limited opportunities to engage in the daily practices that support health and well-being. Isolation has taken hold for many, and the stresses of balancing home life with study or work have taken their toll.

As one of the leadership team in a study and work environment that so many people rely on, well-being is constantly at the forefront of my thinking. My colleagues and

Let's talk about well-being



Students are guided and supported by the university that is committed to helping them develop as well-rounded people. (Picture taken before the Covid-19 pandemic).

I am even more attuned to this as we begin to prepare for the arrival of new and returning students in September, many of whom have experienced prolonged periods of online learning.

Arriving at university is always a big step and, in some ways, can be quite daunting. Many of our students join us having left behind the familiarity of home life to take on the challenge of living independently. With students from over 85 different countries, many will have travelled far from the things they know. Add to this the increased expectations of independent learning that are the hallmarks of a university education,

and it is completely understandable that along with the excitement comes big fear.

Thankfully, they'll be joining an enabling and supportive environment that responds to student needs in a holistic way.

Students joining the University of Nottingham Malaysia will be guided and supported by a personal tutor, and a course team that is committed not only to their academic and professional development but also their rounded development as people. This often means being on hand to provide important pastoral support, listening to and guiding students as they identify and seek to respond to any challenges they face.

By
ASSOC PROF
DR JASON
PANDYA-
WOOD



“Students will join an enabling and supportive environment that responds to student needs in a holistic way.”

And when things get tough – which they will often do – the university provides vital additional well-being services including counselling and mental health support.

One of the most significant advances I think we've made over the recent past is our willingness to talk about well-being, especially in challenging previous stigma around mental health. Students joining us this coming semester can be assured that this is a conversation we'll always be ready to have, whether we're online or on campus.

■ Assoc Prof Dr Jason Pandya-Wood is dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Nottingham Malaysia.

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BE a leader in public health management, stay ahead by enhancing knowledge and skills in public health without compromising on employment with an open and distance learning (ODL) programme by International Medical University (IMU).

With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, managing public health is a skill that is currently relevant to all healthcare professionals and non-healthcare graduates working in the healthcare sector. At IMU, the Master of Science in Public Health (MScPH) programme facilitates the building of a solid foundation in good leadership that focuses on improving the health of the whole population with emphasis on the prevention of disease within a community. It involves training in effective communication, critical thinking, attention to detail, development of self-control and confidence in handling public health issues including disasters and pandemics.

It is without a doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic came with great challenges to academia. By that time, IMU already had an established ODL MScPH programme specifically catered to individuals who do not have the luxury of attending on-campus classes, giving them the opportunity to complete the course from the comforts of their own home. With the ODL MScPH programme, students can enhance their qualifications while being employed by enrolling as part-time students, where they can complete the course over two to six years.

The IMU MScPH programme attracts students from diverse health backgrounds, including nursing, pharmaceutical, medical, health administration and business. One of these students is Dr Shazatul Shazmin, a part-time ODL student and an employee of the Health Ministry, who states that the flexibility of the part-time programme "allowed balancing between work, life and acquisition of higher education which will enhance (her) career pathway of a public health physician."

The MScPH programme is offered not only through online delivery but on-campus delivery as well, open to both local and

Developing leadership in public health



IMU's MScPH programme attracts students from diverse health backgrounds, including nursing, pharmaceutical, medical, health administration and business.

international students. Despite the setbacks posed by Covid-19, there has been a seamless transition from on-campus learning activities to online. This is because IMU had already embarked on teaching via digital technology for many years prior to the crisis. Even with this head start, with the prolonged MCO, IMU had to develop new approaches to delivering the programme with greater agility and flexibility without compromising on teaching and learning outcomes.

Abigail, a student from the on-campus MScPH programme, shares, "We are in a generation that spends a lot of time online, so switching learning methods to online was

a relatively smooth process. The lecturers from all the modules made this possible and they continue to be very responsive. The frequency of emails and TEAMS meetings have been very conducive to learning."

The MScPH programme is focused on providing an exciting curriculum for the students, with a variety of teaching methods employed, including tutorials, videos, practical, field visits, seminar presentations, interactive videos, case discussions, on-site public health attachments and lectures.

Students are taught important aspects of public health for the duties that they will be expected to conduct, such as data collection,

analysis and interpretation; community health needs research and investigative epidemic research; development of strategies and programmes in disease prevention; intersectoral collaboration with other healthcare agencies for community health improvement; establishing alliances for the appraisal and improvement of policies and legislation involving health and disease prevention; planning and executing effective health promotion events and programmes to increase ownership and empowerment of individuals and communities regarding their health and well-being in line with the World Health Organization's consolidated guideline recommendations on self-care interventions for health 2021.

This content is delivered by experienced faculty, who have specialised public health experience in the government and private sectors both nationally and internationally.

IMU offers postgraduate programmes including Master in Science programmes in Public Health, Analytical and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Molecular Medicine, Acupuncture and Pharmacy Practice; Master of Counselling; Postgraduate Diplomas in Diabetes Management and Education, Implant Dentistry, Endodontics and Prosthodontics; postgraduate programmes in Health Professions Education, Health Informatics and Analytics and Business Administration in Healthcare Management as well as MSc and PhD in Medical and Health Sciences.

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Through these programmes, UNITAR's vice chancellor Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Datuk Sri Ir Dr Sahol Hamid shares that the university is aiming for a 100% employability rate for UNITAR students. "The industry wants students who can enter the job market and be ready to work. We are meeting the needs of the industry, with employers telling us the characteristics and skills that they need from future jobseekers; and the Micro-Credential programmes will cover those gaps," he explains.

Those who are keen to further their education but lack academic qualifications can seek recognition of prior experiential learning through work experience. UNITAR is an accredited assessment centre for APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) and therefore offers free APEL processing for candidates enrolling into any of UNITAR's full academic programmes.

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Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Datuk Sri Ir Dr Sahol Hamid.

Micro-Credentials.

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■ For more information, call 03-7627 7200, WhatsApp 011-1051 2825, email enquiries@unitar.my, visit UNITAR's website <https://unitar.my/> or follow its Facebook and Instagram: @myunitar.



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