For a greener urban future

IN a world where cities generate mountains of waste every day, true change often begins with a single question: What if waste had value?

For Yap Jing Zong, alumnus of the Bachelor of Mechatronics Engineering with Honours at Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT), this question became the catalyst for a social venture that is reshaping how communities view, manage and repurpose food waste.

His innovation, the BioBin system, shows that sustainability does not always require hi-tech solutions; sometimes, it requires clarity of purpose, engineering fundamentals and a heart for the community.

"I was motivated by seeing how much food waste from restaurants and markets goes directly to landfills every day.

"It felt wrong to watch something so valuable being wasted while our soils are losing fertility.

"I wanted to find a practical solution that could close this loop, turning waste into compost, improving soil health and creating green jobs. That's how BioBin started," he shares.

Yap's BioBin system breaks down organic waste through controlled aeration and moisture balance, producing nutrient-rich compost.

Convincing the public that food waste could become a resource was not easy. "Many businesses worried about smell, hygiene and extra work," he recalls.

Starting with a few supportive restaurants and hotels, he demonstrated results through a clean, odourless and electricity-free composting system.

"The biggest challenge was changing mindsets, but this changed once they saw the waste disappear and the quality of the compost. Naturally, more partners wanted to join the effort."

BioBin's success lies in the engineering foundation Yap acquired in his degree programme.

"My mechatronics background was a great help in the system thinking – understanding airflow, moisture balance, simple mechanics and user behaviour. We focus on natural aeration and microbial balance.

"The BioBin design uses passive airflow, moisture control and layering techniques that create ideal conditions for aerobic composting without the need for electricity.

"By optimising the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, the system prevents odours while producing high-quality compost; a low-tech yet powerful solution ideal for urban environments. The goal is to make the process stable, simple, and human-friendly, not complicated," Yap explains.

To expand the initiative, education played a crucial role. By presenting clear data on waste generation and demonstrating how the system works, Yap was able to show businesses that managing waste sustainably is both practical and cost-saving.

He explains that the broader effort is part of a community-focused Urban Recycling Ecosystem, which brings together young people, small businesses and residents to support composting and urban farming.

Behind this impactful venture lies a solid foundation built at TAR UMT.

"TAR UMT played a big role. The academic environment encouraged critical thinking and problem-solving, while group projects strengthened my teamwork and leadership skills.

"Being surrounded by diverse, driven peers also inspired me to take bold steps and put my ideas into practice," he shared.

Yap credits the university not only for his technical grounding in mechatronics, but also for the confidence and mentorship support to pursue entrepreneurship.

■ To find out more about the Engineering programmes at TAR UMT, join its Open Day on March 28 and 29, from 10am to 5pm. Alternatively, contact the Faculty of Engineering and Technology at 011-1082 5613 or 011-1059 7120 or email foet@tarc.edu.my.

Prospective students are encouraged to apply online at *www.tarc.edu.my*. Various types of financial aid are also available for qualified students.

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Management and Science University (MSU) is a globally recognised institution, ranked by both Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education (THE). Committed to developing well-rounded human capital, MSU envisions a more sustainable and inclusive future. Through transformative learning experiences, the university promotes equality and strives to create a level playing field for all, enriching lives and shaping tomorrow's leaders.

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Yayasan msu

Leading with strategy and dignity

THE business world today is changing fast, with leaders now expected to do more than just manage daily operations.

They need to think ahead, make responsible decisions and guide their organisations through uncertainty, digital change and growing expectations around ethics and sustainability.

Recognising these realities, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) offers the Master of Business Administration (Corporate Management), a postgraduate programme designed to develop capable, responsible and forward-thinking corporate leaders.

Offered at the Teh Hong Piow Faculty of Business and Finance, the programme equips students with a strong foundation in strategic management, corporate governance, finance, marketing, leadership and organisational behaviour.

It combines academic knowledge with real business applications, helping students connect theory directly to workplace practice. More than an academic qualification, the programme focuses on developing critical thinking, sound decision-making and governance awareness.

Programme head Dr Azeyan Awee shared that the programme is designed with the future of corporate leadership in mind, by encouraging a shift in mindset.

"Many of our students are already working and managing responsibilities at work. The programme is designed to help them think more clearly, make better decisions and lead with integrity, not just to earn a qualification," she shared.

"We want our students to feel more confident in handling complex issues, whether it is managing people, making strategic choices or balancing business goals with ethical responsibilities."

The MBA (Corporate Management) is suitable for working professionals, mid-level managers, entrepreneurs and those preparing for senior leadership roles.

Classes involve discussions, case studies, applied projects and real business examples that students can immediately relate to their own work.

The flexible structure allows students to continue working while studying, making it a practical option for those who want to upgrade themselves without putting their careers on hold.

Students also benefit from UTAR's supportive learning environment, experienced lecturers and opportunities to engage with industry and international partners.

UTAR offers over 140 programmes from foundation studies to bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees.

UTAR's Master of Business Administration (Corporate Management) programme is designed to develop capable, responsible and forward-thinking corporate leaders.

■ To learn more, visit UTAR's Open Day on April 4-5 and April 25-26, from 9am to 4.30pm, at the Kampar and Sungai Long campuses. For more information, go to *www.utar.edu.my* or call 05-468 8888 (Kampar campus) or 03-9086 0288 (Sungai Long campus).

Explore career opportunities

MSU is committed to transforming lives and enriching the future through education.

WHAT'S next after completing your Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)? Discover your future at Management and Science University (MSU).

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As a multi-global-ranked institution, MSU is committed to developing holistic graduates while promoting equal opportunities for all through quality education and industry-relevant learning experiences.

MSU offers an excellent opportunity for prospective students and parents to obtain detailed information about the university through dedicated meet-up sessions with academic counsellors.

In addition, engagement sessions with faculty members provide further insights into potential career pathways and offer a glimpse into student life at MSU.

Visitors can also experience campus life firsthand by visiting MSU's main campus in Shah Alam or its satellite campuses nationwide.

The university's award-winning academic programmes meet stringent standards of local and international bodies. MSU's accreditors include the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Japan's Alliance on Business Education and Scholarship for Tomorrow, the Netherlands' Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities, the United Kingdom's Institute of Biomedical Science and Sri Lanka's University Grant Commission.

MSU is currently listed among the top universities in the world by QS, including being ranked 597th in the QS World University Rankings 2026, in the QS Top 100 for the world's best young universities, in the QS ranked 125th for Asia's best universities, in the QS ranked 30th for Southeast Asia's best universities, and in the QS Top 301+ for Graduate Employability Ranking.

As an applied and enterprise university focused to enhance graduate employability, MSU's graduate employability currently ranks at 99% of its graduates successfully securing employment within six months of their graduation on the Higher Education Ministry's tracer study.

MSU's mission for excellence is guided by key benchmarks including internationalisation, industry relevance, a job-creator mindset, community sustainability, research, lifelong learning and flexible education.

MSU's Premier Digital Technology Institution status marks it as a key contributor to Malaysia's digital education ecosystem by blending academic excellence, industry relevance and a future-focused curriculum that equips graduates for success in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

Extensive partnerships and collaborations with over 500 institutions across more than 40 countries provide MSU students with many mobility opportunities.

■ MSU offers foundation, undergraduate, postgraduate and flexible programmes through an inclusive entry system that welcomes students from all walks of life, reflecting its commitment to transforming lives and enriching the future through education.

Visit MSU's Open Day and take the first step toward your future.

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Prof Ahmad Izanee believes the management of powerful AI technologies must balance innovation with accountability and governance.

Prof Santhi notes that technological interventions applied without sufficient critique may obscure educational realities rather than address them.

Prof Lim characterises the manifesto as a thinking person's compass for the critical application of AI in education.

Human-centric AI in education

OPEN University Malaysia (OUM) recently launched the Southeast Asian Manifesto on the Humancentric Application of AI Technologies in Education, a regional intervention that calls for more deliberate, ethical and context-sensitive approaches to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education.

Malaysia's ambition to position itself as an "AI nation" by 2030 is commendable and supported by state policies that encourage the responsible and ethical development of AI.

Yet, despite this policy intent, there remains a marked lack of sustained questioning on how AI is being adopted and deployed, underscoring the need for the manifesto.

Too often, AI is treated as a self-evident good rather than as a set of choices that demand critical scrutiny, including why it is being introduced, for what purposes and in whose interests.

Without such interrogation, it becomes easy to lose sight of what AI is meant to serve, who benefits from its use and what forms of education and social value are ultimately being prioritised.

The manifesto responds to this unquestioning orientation by insisting that the use of AI in education must be guided by clearly articulated human, ethical and pedagogical purposes.

Crucially, it argues that such commitments cannot remain at the level of principle or rhetoric but must be embedded in concrete practices.

Rather than focusing narrowly on technological capability, the manifesto redirects attention to a more fundamental question: what education is for, and how digital tools might support those aims without undermining them.

According to OUM president and vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Izanee Awang, national and global ambitions must be matched by clear institutional missions and evolving approaches to the management of powerful AI technologies, balancing innovation with accountability and governance.

While the drive towards AI reflects important foresight, what is required of educational institutions is not a simplistic embrace of technology, but its critical and context-sensitive application.

> "As a leading provider of digital education, OUM recognises that shaping sustainable digital futures cannot be borne by any single party alone."

In this view, progress is measured not by speed of adoption, but by the quality of judgement exercised in deployment.

The manifesto further develops this position by arguing that AI should never be treated as a substitute for professional judgement, institutional responsibility or social deliberation.

It calls for careful attention to questions of equity, accountability, governance and data sovereignty, especially in educational settings where decisions have long-term consequences for learners.

These principles inform OUM's leadership in human-centric AI in education, which is enacted through ethical engagement and transparent practices across how AI is developed, governed and applied within the university.

OUM vice president and deputy vice-chancellor Prof Datin Dr Santhi Raghavan, who is responsible for the university's learner experience and technology, observed that technological interventions applied without sufficient critique may obscure educational realities rather than address them.

This is particularly the case when deeper structural and social challenges are mistaken for technical problems.

These concerns are especially pronounced in South-East Asia. The region is characterised by wide disparities in technological accessibility, infrastructure, financial and human resources and institutional capacity.

Educational systems operate within diverse cultural and economic contexts, many of which cannot be addressed through imported technological templates or one-size-fits-all solutions.

Uncritical adoption of AI therefore risks entrenching inequality and marginalising local knowledge and practices.

The manifesto positions the region as an active site of reflection and knowledge production rather than a passive recipient of global technological trends.

It foregrounds regionally grounded perspectives that take lived realities, historical conditions and future aspirations seriously.

By pairing innovation with critique, the manifesto creates space for more inclusive and contextually grounded conversations about AI in education.

For Assoc Prof Dr David Lim, the intent of the manifesto is deliberately modest yet principled.

As director of the OUM think tank, the Centre for Digital Education Futures (Cendef), he characterises the manifesto as a thinking person's compass for the critical application of AI in education, one that calls for critical reflection on how and why AI is introduced, and to whom its benefits ultimately accrue.

As a leading provider of digital education, OUM recognises that shaping sustainable digital futures cannot be borne by any single party alone.

It requires the participation of educators, policymakers, industry actors, civil society and the wider public.

The manifesto is offered as an open invitation for reflection, dialogue and collective endorsement of shared principles aimed at guiding, rather than dictating, the role of AI in education.

■ For more information, the manifesto is available for public reading and endorsement at *cendef.oum.edu.my/sea-manifesto/*

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More than a stepping stone

TOH Boon Kheng, a PhD student, shares his academic experiences and insights.

I am a PhD candidate at the University of York, researching selective attention and working memory. At the time of writing, I am awaiting my thesis defence.

As a psychologist, I primarily use experimental and behavioural methods to investigate cognition. I also completed an MSc in Cognitive Neuroscience at York, where I received formal training in neuroimaging techniques.

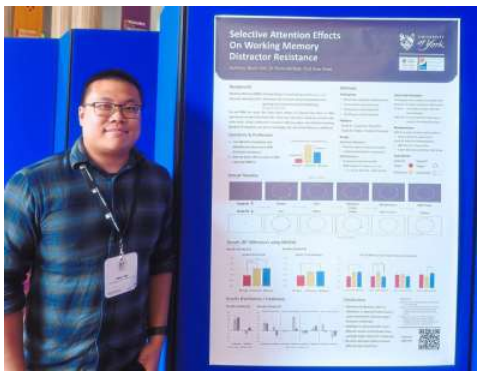
My academic journey began in 2014 at IMU University, where I enrolled in the psychology programme before transferring to the University of Strathclyde.

I graduated in 2018, marking the culmination of a four-year undergraduate experience shaped by two institutions, two countries and a decade of growth that I am only now fully able to appreciate.

During my two years at IMU, I was introduced to the full spectrum of core areas required for a British Psychological Society-accredited psychology degree: Research Methods, Biological Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Individual Differences, Social Psychology and Developmental Psychology.

To the uninitiated, these subject areas may sound broad or abstract, but they form the backbone of professional psychological training in the UK. Notably, these six domains later constituted the core of my third year at Strathclyde.

Having developed familiarity and competence in these areas made my transition to Strathclyde remarkably smooth. The structure and expectations at IMU prepared me well not only in terms of content knowledge, but also in academic rigour.



Toh says early training in statistics and research methods at IMU University, provided the analytical foundation for his later work in complex techniques.

The detailed feedback and close support from lecturers at IMU strengthened my analytical thinking and academic writing. By the time I entered Strathclyde, I felt equipped not just to cope, but to thrive.

The IMU pathway also provided a practical advantage. Completing two years locally before transferring to the UK made pursuing an international degree more financially accessible.

At the time, I thought I would leave IMU with fond memories and meaningful friendships. In hindsight, I left with far more – a durable academic foundation that continues to shape my work today.

While statistics can feel daunting to many students, the structured and methodical way it was taught at IMU instilled confidence rather than fear.

Later at Strathclyde, I revisited research methods in greater depth. The principles – checking assumptions, selecting appropriate analyses, interpreting outputs critically – remained consistent.

This continuity extended into my undergraduate dissertation and subsequently, into my MSc at York, where I engaged with more advanced analytical approaches.

The conceptual clarity developed during my early years proved invaluable when I began learning neuroimaging analysis, quantitative meta-analysis, and Bayesian statistics. These techniques are more complex in execution, but they rest upon the same fundamental logic introduced during my undergraduate training.

When I started analysing behavioural data for my PhD, the datasets initially felt overwhelming. So I returned to the fundamentals: start from the base, proceed systematically and ensure the data are prepared correctly before drawing conclusions.

This foundation has supported my work presented at respected international conferences, including the 4th International Conference on Working Memory.

My journey has also come full circle in unexpected ways. In my role as a lecturer, I often reflect on the educators who shaped my own academic development.

At IMU, lecturers were approachable, supportive and genuinely invested in student progress. Their openness made it easier to ask questions and grow more confident in academic discussions.

While I also learned from outstanding lecturers at Strathclyde, the larger campus and class sizes created a different dynamic. The sense of familiarity I experienced at IMU was distinctive, and I have consciously sought to emulate that environment in my own teaching.

Looking back, my time at IMU was not just a stepping stone – it was the starting stretch of a marathon I am still running.

Prep ahead for better mornings

ALTHOUGH research shows that waking up early isn't always the most effective way to learn, students still often face morning classes. These tips can help keep your energy up for those early starts:

Establish a consistent sleep schedule

Aim to go to bed at the same time each night, avoiding late nights whenever possible. Your body thrives on routine, so train yourself to sleep at a reasonable hour. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep.

Harness natural light

Daylight stimulates the brain, just as darkness promotes sleep. If you need to rise after dawn, open your curtains immediately when your alarm goes off to soak in the sun's energising rays.

Invest in a coffee maker

An automatic coffee maker can have your favourite brew ready when you wake up. If coffee isn't your preference, consider brewing fragrant herbal teas instead.

Prepare the night before

Lay out your clothes and pack your book bag the night before. This minimises morning decision-making and lets you wake up at your own pace, reducing stress.

Diversity in biomedical sciences

Alongside practical expertise, NUMed empowers future biomedical scientists to champion diversity and inclusive thinking as foundations for stronger research, health outcomes and public trust.

BIOMEDICAL sciences demand a broad spectrum of voices to reflect the complexity of the world they seek to understand and improve.

Human health is shaped by factors that vary widely across populations, such as genetics, culture, environment and lived experience.

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Inclusive biomedical education bridges the gap between science and society by equipping students to understand the social, cultural and economic contexts of health.

This also helps reduce blind spots and enables the development of equitable healthcare solutions.

As educators, Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed) ensures that the next generation of biomedical scientists recognises diversity as a cornerstone of meaningful scientific advancement that improves research quality, healthcare outcomes and societal trust in science alongside technical expertise.

By embedding diversity into its BSc (Honours) Biomedical Sciences programme, the university prepares students to ask better questions, design more representative studies and develop solutions that are effective across different populations.

"NUMed's international environment and exposure to diverse healthcare systems provide students with a truly global perspective.

"This prepares them to navigate the complexities of a globalised healthcare landscape and contribute to biomedical and healthcare solutions," said NUMed Biomedical Sciences dean Assoc Prof Dr Madihah Rushaidhi.

Through its continuous commitment to providing global engagement and perspectives, NUMed ensures that its Biomedical Sciences programme develops scientists who can improve health outcomes for diverse communities worldwide.

■ Find out more at *http://www.newcastle.edu.my* or email admissions@newcastle.edu.my, call +607-555 3800, WhatsApp +6011-1231 5411/+6012-784 9456 or visit NUMed's Open Day on April 4.

At MSU College, students are exposed to accounting principles and auditing, as well as the latest developments in economics, management, marketing, finance and insurance.

A bright future in accounting

CAREERS in accounting and finance are in high demand across all industries.

Professionals in these fields oversee budgeting and financial advice, as well as preparing annual financial statements and auditing a company's accounts efficiently.

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The curriculum ensures that students are not only capable of performing accounting transactions but also of making tough business decisions.

Topics of study include economics, information technology and accounting law.

Students with three credits in Mathematics, Science and any other subject in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, or recognised certificates, can expect a conducive learning environment and high-calibre academics.

These include initiatives linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals initiatives, community engagements and entrepreneurial embedded ecosystems.

Credit transfer allows MSU College graduates to pursue a second-year bachelor's degree at MSU through its Faculty of Business Management and Professional Studies.

Students are also encouraged to pursue additional accounting qualifications, such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants or Certified Accounting Technician certifications, to increase their earning power.

Other programmes offered by SHB include Early Childhood Education, Management and English Language Teaching.

MSU College is also the MSU APEL Centre for potential candidates to take the APEL Aptitude Test as the non-conventional pre-qualification for entry into higher studies, in which MSU offers APEL A and APEL C at T-3 (certificate), T-4 (diploma), T-6 (bachelor's) and T-7 (master's) levels.

■ For more information, visit *www.msucollege.edu.my*, email enquiry@msucollege.my or call 06-764 8686 (Seremban campus).