

Rethinking Skills

For a Changing World of Work

Building Human Capability for
an AI-Driven Future

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

03 | Editor's Note

COVER STORY

RETHINKING SKILLS FOR A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

04 & 05 | Five Workforce Challenges Reshaping AI Adoption in Malaysia's Semiconductor Industry

SPOTLIGHT

06 | WOU Recognised for Excellence in Digital Learning
WOU and JSkills Forge Partnership to Support Johor's Future Workforce

07 | WOU Academy and TT Vision Graduate First Cohort Under Smart Manufacturing Upskilling Collaboration

08 & 09 | WOU InnovateX 2026 Showcases STEAM Ideas Built for Real-World Impact

EVENTS

10 | Celebrating a Partnership for Community Wellbeing
Continuous Reskilling Central to Business Reorganisation
Women's Leadership Key to an Inclusive Climate Economy

ACADEMIC

11 | WOU Opens Global Call for Papers for ICiMR 2026
12 | WOU-PUP Partnership Strengthens Regional Open and Distance e-Learning Collaboration
13 | WOU and PUP Open University System Launch First Academic Engagement with Virtual Lecture
WOU Hosts PUP Open University System for Strategic Benchmarking Visit

PEOPLE

14 & 15 | A Celebration of Resilience and Future Ambition
Honouring WOU's Graduates
16 | Looking Ahead: The Future of Learning and WOU

CONTACT US

Regional Centres and Offices

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: 04-226 4500

Kuching Office

Lot 302, 3rd Floor,
Crown Square,
88, Jalan Pending,
93450 Kuching
Sarawak
Tel: 082- 331 183 / 082 - 331 303

Johor Bahru Regional Centre

48, Jalan Pertama1,
Pusat Perdagangan,
Danga Utama,
81200 Johor Bahru, Johor
Tel: 07-5564 4323
Fax: 07-5549 323

Ipoh Office

66, Jalan Raja Ekram
30300 Ipoh, Perak
Tel: 05-242 6323 / 243 6323

Kuala Lumpur Office

49-1, Level 1,
The Boulevard,
Mid Valley City,
Lingkaran Syed Putra,
59200 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 03-2202 2840 / 2201 7578



Main Campus

WOU (Wawasan Open University)
54, Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah
10050 Penang, Malaysia



City Campus

7,9,13, Gat Lebu China,
10300, Penang, Malaysia
Tel: 04-218 0333
Fax: 04-226 9323

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of WawasanLink holds deep personal significance as I reflect on the conclusion of my seven-year journey as Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor.

Through the collective dedication of our community, WOU has strengthened its foundations, expanded its reach, and deepened its relevance in helping working professionals acquire vital skills and credentials.

I am immensely grateful for the privilege of serving this institution and working alongside colleagues, partners, and friends who champion our mission.

My sincere gratitude goes to the Board of Directors of the Wawasan Education Foundation, chaired by Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, for their steadfast support throughout my tenure; the Board of Directors of Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd, led by Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, for their invaluable guidance; and the University's Board of Governors, chaired by Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, for the trust and mandate placed in me to lead WOU.

As WOU enters its next chapter, I am hopeful that the strategic vision and commitment that shaped our progress will continue to guide the University forward.

At our Industry Leadership Dialogue on Future Workforce and AI Upskilling with Coursera, leaders from Penang's semiconductor and electronics ecosystem identified five workforce challenges arising from artificial intelligence (AI) adoption. WOU's role is to translate these needs into flexible, credible, and workplace-relevant learning pathways. The successful completion of the Professional Certification in IoT-enabled Manufacturing Analytics by the first cohort from our industry partner, TT Vision, demonstrates how focused upskilling can deliver workplace value. We hope to expand this industry-linked model to more sectors, helping employers strengthen workforce capabilities through targeted reskilling and customised training solutions.

Our new partnership with the Johor Skills Development Centre (JSkills) extends this commitment to the southern region. With the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone taking shape, we look forward to supporting talent development initiatives and contributing meaningfully to the opportunities emerging from this vital economic corridor.

Innovation remains core to our identity. InnovateX 2026, our annual technological competition spearheaded by the School of Technology and Engineering Science, featured nearly 60 projects from tertiary students, researchers, and industry practitioners. Entries spanned diverse areas, including smart urban farming, mechatronics, educational technology and construction.

International engagement continues to broaden WOU's exchange of knowledge and expertise. Our partnership with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University System marks another step in strengthening collaboration in open and distance learning.

Our warmest congratulations to all our April graduates; we look forward to celebrating with them at WOU's convocation ceremony in November. Their journeys remind us why universities must do more than prepare learners for a single role in a changing world of work. We must create pathways for people to return to learning, reskill, and progress throughout their lives.

As I reflect on my tenure, I am encouraged by the University's clarity of purpose and the promise of what lies ahead. I am confident that WOU will continue to drive workforce transformation, respond dynamically to industry needs, and empower learners to advance with confidence.

To the entire WOU community, thank you for making my journey so profoundly rewarding and meaningful. I look forward to witnessing your progress and celebrating every future milestone from the wings.

Chief Editor:	Professor Dr Lily Chan (Chief Executive & Vice-Chancellor)
Editorial Team:	Julia Oh, Natasha Mahtani, Wong Peng Lin
Design & Photography:	Muhammad Aswad Bin Zambary, Yokesswaran A/L Cheladorai
Circulation & Distribution:	Zubaydah Binti Zamri
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

FIVE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES RESHAPING AI ADOPTION IN MALAYSIA'S SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

Insights from WOU Industry Leadership Dialogue on Future Workforce & AI Upskilling



Coursera's Shloma says more organisations are moving away from conventional on-the-job and role-based training towards skills-based development.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming manufacturing and the semiconductor industry at an unprecedented pace — but technology itself is not the greatest challenge. According to industry leaders, the real test lies in building a workforce with the skills, agility, and leadership capability to harness AI effectively.

That was the clear message emerging from Wawasan Open University's (WOU) Industry Leadership Dialogue: Future Workforce & AI Upskilling, where leaders across Penang's semiconductor ecosystem identified five recurring workforce challenges that are gradually reshaping the future of the industry.

Held on 19 June 2026 at WOU's Homestead in partnership with Coursera, the closed-door dialogue brought together senior leaders from across the semiconductor and electronics value chain.

Participating organisations included Dell Technologies, TT Vision Holdings Berhad, Inari Amertron Berhad, Oppstar Berhad, Penchem Technologies Sdn Bhd, ViTrox, and QDOS Holdings Berhad.

AI Needs People, Not Just Code

COURSERA representatives Tarun Nallu, Director of Strategic Accounts, Asia Pacific, and Elena Shloma, Account Director, Coursera for Business, Asia Pacific, framed the discussion around AI-driven workforce transformation and the shift from role-based to skills-based learning.

Shloma highlighted a mismatch between investment in AI technology and in the people expected to use it. Technology alone, she said, would not deliver the desired gains unless employees could apply AI, interpret information, and redesign work.

"AI doesn't run on code itself. It is run by people who know how to use AI, innovate together with AI, and apply new tools. We should therefore view AI as a means of augmenting human capabilities rather than simply replacing tasks," she said.

Speed is Outpacing Organisational Response

FOR Vasu Velayuthan, Chief Strategy Officer of TT Vision Technologies, speed has become a defining measure of competitiveness. "Speed is the new currency," he said, stressing that manufacturing teams must turn machine data into useful information, act on it, and resolve production or yield issues faster.

At Dell Technologies, Vivien Liaw, Director, Supply Chain, said agentic AI is also changing expectations by making performance gaps more visible.

"What AI has enabled is quick visibility to surface things that are not working," she said.

The workforce challenge is therefore not limited to adopting AI tools, but extends to how quickly organisations can equip people to make decisions, solve problems, and act with confidence.

AI Multiplies Skills, But Technical Fundamentals Remain Essential

PARTICIPANTS also stressed that AI should be viewed as a multiplier of skills, not a substitute for technical depth. In fields such as IC design, manufacturing analytics, specialty materials, and process engineering, AI can improve productivity, but only when employees have the judgement to validate and apply its outputs correctly.

Yeap Soon Lee, Executive Vice President of Oppstar Berhad, said this is especially important for future IC design talent: "The basics need to be there. Without that, you are just using AI, and it becomes garbage-in, garbage-out. AI is just a tool."

CS Tan, CEO of Penchem Technologies Sdn Bhd, echoed the concern, warning that employees must understand the principles behind the tools they use.

"Without knowing the fundamentals, the tool is very dangerous," he said.

A Generational and Knowledge-Transfer Gap is Widening

NOORAZIDI Bin Che Azib, Deputy Vice President of Inari Amertron Berhad, noted that senior employees possess deep, hands-on expertise in maintenance and process engineering, while younger employees are often more comfortable with digital and generative AI tools but may lack operational context.

To bridge this divide, he suggested that senior technical knowledge could be captured in structured databases and supported through AI-enabled retrieval tools, allowing accumulated experience to be transferred more systematically to newer employees.



The dialogue brought together representatives from Dell Technologies, TT Vision Holdings Berhad, Inari Amertron Berhad, Oppstar Berhad, Penchem Technologies Sdn. Bhd., ViTrox, and QDOS Holdings Berhad.

CS Tan, CEO of Penchem Technologies Sdn Bhd, echoed the concern, warning that employees must understand the principles behind the tools they use.

“Without knowing the fundamentals, the tool is very dangerous,” he said.

Execution, Not Access to Information, is The Real Bottleneck

THE dialogue also highlighted a practical reality: information is increasingly available, but execution remains difficult. Many organisations still struggle to turn information into timely action, especially in production environments where delays can affect yield, quality, and delivery.

Lim Chuen Ming, the dialogue facilitator, summarised the issue in his closing synthesis: “Information is everywhere. What’s missing is how fast it turns into action on the shop floor.”

Multidisciplinary and Continuous Upskilling is Now Necessary

AS AI changes how work is organised, employees can no longer depend only on narrow job knowledge.

CS Tan said organisations need to move employees from “I-shaped” expertise towards broader “T-shaped” and “X-shaped” capability, supported by clearer skills mapping, internal trainers, and practical learning environments.

Dell’s Chan Kim Beng, Senior Advisor, Learning and Development, said AI is also reshaping learning and development roles, with

Dell’s internal discussions pointing towards the emergence of the “capability architect” as a future role for L&D professionals.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Beh Kok Hooi of ViTrox added that AI expectations are moving beyond automation towards decision-support capabilities, including the use of AI agents.

Participants also stressed the need for role-based skills mapping, internal trainers, practical learning environments, and stronger incentives for employees to keep learning.

Turning Insight Into Action

THE dialogue reinforced the need for closer academia-industry collaboration to turn workforce insights into flexible, skills-based learning solutions aligned with real workplace demands.

WOU’s Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa said the University’s corporate training arm, WOU Academy, is well positioned to help organisations convert workforce capability needs into recognised, operationally viable learning pathways.

“Universities and industry must evolve from reactive training to the proactive creation of a resilient, highly agile talent ecosystem that secures Malaysia’s standing in the global supply network,” he said.

The next phase will translate these insights into action through clearer skills mapping, workplace-relevant learning pathways, and pilot programmes in AI readiness, technical upskilling, knowledge transfer, and industry exposure.

WOU RECOGNISED FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIGITAL LEARNING



Tun Dato' Seri Zaki Tun Azmi presenting the award to Prof Chan. Photo courtesy of KSI.

Wawasan Open University (WOU) received the Malaysian Digital Learning Excellence and Leadership Award at the 9th Malaysian Education and Learning Summit, held on 16 April 2026 in Kuala Lumpur.

WOU's Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Lily Chan, accepted the award on behalf of the University from Tun Dato' Seri Zaki Tun Azmi, Chancellor of Multimedia University and MAHSA University.

The award recognised WOU's contribution to advancing digitally

enabled open and distance learning, particularly in providing flexible higher education and upskilling opportunities for working adults.

Prof. Chan said the recognition reflected the University's progress in developing a scalable digital learning model and strengthening its position in digital open and distance learning.

"As continuous upskilling becomes the norm, WOU is positioned to support the shift towards lifelong, skills-driven learning aligned with the needs of a digital economy," she said.

During the summit, Prof. Chan also participated in a leadership dialogue titled "Integrating Universities, TVET, and Industry into a Single Talent Market – Delivering Blueprint Outcomes Through Market Coordination."

She shared perspectives on the evolving role of universities, graduate readiness, and the potential of AI and data analytics to support more targeted workforce planning.

Organised by the KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific in collaboration with the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities and the National Association of Private Educational Institutions, the summit brought together leaders from education, technology, and industry to discuss talent development in Malaysia's AI- and digital-driven economy.

WOU AND JSKILLS FORGE PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT JOHOR'S FUTURE WORKFORCE

Wawasan Open University (WOU) and the Johor Skills Development Centre (JSkills) have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to expand upskilling, reskilling, and career progression opportunities for Johor's workforce.

The signing took place on 23 June 2026 during the JSkills Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Seminar 2026 in Johor Bahru. Themed "Building Safer Workplaces, Shaping a Sustainable Future," the seminar brought together approximately 150 industry participants.

The MoA was signed by JSkills Chief Executive Officer Dr. Mohamad Anas bin Mohamad Annuar and WOU Head of Marketing (Regional Operations and Marketing) Mike Sim. The signing was witnessed by Johor Talent Development Council Chief Coordinator Hilmy Hussain.

The partnership combines WOU's flexible learning and industry-focused learning pathways with JSkills' role as a one-stop centre for industry training, certification, upskilling, and reskilling in Johor.

Through the collaboration, both institutions will explore workplace-relevant learning and workforce development initiatives that support adult learners, employers, and emerging industry needs.

The partnership is particularly timely as economic activity and talent demand continue to grow around the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone. By widening access to flexible education and targeted skills development, WOU and JSkills aim to strengthen workforce agility and support sustainable regional growth.



From left Dr. Mohamad Anas, Hilmy Hussain, and Mike Sim.

WOU ACADEMY AND TT VISION GRADUATE FIRST COHORT UNDER SMART MANUFACTURING UPSKILLING COLLABORATION



TT Vision CEO Goon Koon Yin says the collaboration with WOU supports the company's long-term talent strategy by preparing its workforce for a more automated and data-driven manufacturing environment.

Wawasan Open University (WOU) and TT Vision Technologies Sdn Bhd (TT Vision) have marked a key milestone in their collaboration with the graduation of 24 TT Vision employees who completed the Professional Certification in IoT-enabled Manufacturing Analytics.

The cohort received their certificates from Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chairman of the WOU Board of Governors, in a ceremony held at WOU's Homestead Hall on 7 May 2026.

Facilitated by WOU Academy and the School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE), the programme consisted of a series of workshops and forms part of a structured talent development pathway for TT Vision employees. It is supported by the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) Advanced Technology Meister Programme (ATMP) grant, which supports capability development in high-value industries.

In her welcome address, WOU Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Lily Chan said that academia-industry collaborations demonstrate how learning is increasingly embedded within operational and talent strategies.

“Organisations that invest in structured capability development are better positioned to sustain competitiveness. Our aim is to equip talent with the right industry-specific competencies and ensure they are prepared for the demands of an increasingly complex, technology-driven environment.”

Pathways Beyond Certification

PARTICIPANTS completed the certification alongside their full-time roles, applying competencies in Internet of Things (IoT) and data analytics directly within their organisation's manufacturing environment.

Beyond IoT-enabled Manufacturing Analytics, TT Vision employees can pursue additional stackable professional certifications leading towards the Master of Science in Smart Manufacturing (MSSM). These include Mechatronics System Design, Additive Manufacturing Excellence, AI-Enhanced Manufacturing and Robotics, and Industry 5.0 Technologies and Additive Manufacturing.

Under WOU's Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) framework, employees can also convert relevant industry experience into academic credit, enabling faster progression towards an accredited degree while remaining in employment.

A Scalable Model for Academia-Industry Collaboration

THIS successful upskilling initiative illustrates how structured, industry-responsive education can be applied by organisations to help address ongoing talent gaps while supporting career mobility.

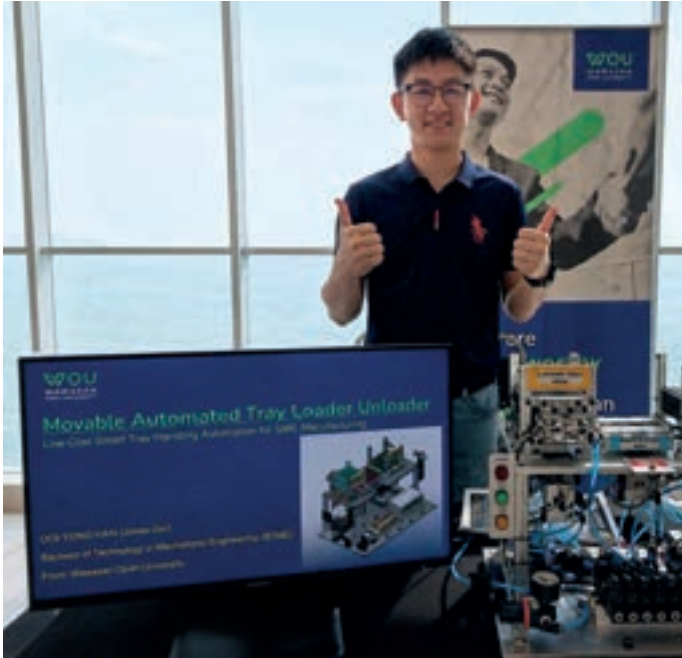
WOU Academy continues to expand such partnerships across industries, offering modular, application-driven programmes aligned with evolving workforce needs.



The successful completion of the inaugural TT Vision cohort demonstrates the value of academia-industry collaboration in strengthening workforce capabilities and readiness

WOU INNOVATEX 2026 SHOWCASES STEAM IDEAS BUILT FOR REAL-WORLD IMPACT

The annual showcase served as a key culmination of WOU's STEAM engagement efforts, bringing together academia and industry through projects shaped by practical innovation.



Final-year Mechatronics student Jonas Ooi Yong Han won the Best WOU Final Year Project Award for his low-cost Movable Automated Tray Loader Unloader, designed to improve efficiency and reduce manual handling in robotic manufacturing.

Wawasan Open University's (WOU) main campus in Penang became a lively setting for ideas, prototypes, and problem-solving as participants gathered for the WOU InnovateX 2026 Final Showcase and Competition on 27 June 2026.

Organised by WOU's School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE), the competition formed part of the University's broader effort to strengthen STEAM engagement by creating practical platforms for tertiary students, educators, researchers, and industry practitioners to connect around ideas shaped by Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

This applied-learning focus has guided WOU's STEAM activities in 2026, including the introduction of the STEAM Apprenticeship Programme and related engagement initiatives. As the flagship showcase, InnovateX gave participants a platform to develop, present, and refine their projects through peer learning, industry evaluation, and public presentation.

Held in both online and on-site formats, this year's InnovateX widened access and participation, with 40 participants completing the online presentation category and 16 finalist projects featured at the physical showcase. The on-site finalists represented tertiary institutions nationwide, as well as a Johor-based start-up.

The projects reflected a broad spectrum of innovation, ranging from artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, and smart farming to inclusive education, healthcare technology, sustainability, and digital learning systems.

In his opening remarks, Associate Professor Ts. Dr. Sean Tan, Dean of School of Technology and Engineering Science, said the showcase celebrated "creativity, innovation, cooperation, and the courage to transform ideas into meaningful solutions".

He added that the competition gave participants a valuable opportunity to test their thinking, learn from feedback, and strengthen their ideas through exchange with others.

"Innovation is not measured by only winning the trophy, but true innovation is about solving the real problem, improving life, and having resilience to keep learning and improving," Dr. Tan said.

Keynote speaker Synmon Song, Head of Research and Technical Director of Ezi Motartech Sdn Bhd, brought an industry lens to the showcase, drawing from his journey from mechatronics and robotics into construction chemicals to show how technical capabilities can move across sectors.

"I hope today's session encourages you to see that engineering is not confined to one industry," he said, adding that analytical thinking and problem-solving skills can create impact in fields ranging from robotics to advanced construction materials.



Meaningful innovation lies in solving real problems and continuously improving, says Dr. Sean Tan.

Grand Champion: An AI That Teaches Through Ten Personas

THE Grand Champion Award went to Dr. Mohd Firdauz bin Mohd Fathir of UiTM Rembau for VERSA – Virtual Educational Role-based Smart Agent, an AI-driven educational model that deploys ten virtual personas, from The Analyst to The Visionary, to drive richer classroom discussion through multiple perspectives and role-based discourse.

WOU RISING INNOVATORS

WOU's own finalists earned strong recognition for their technical and applied potential:



Most Market-Ready Innovation Award

Seng Choi Yee

Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronics

Project: Self-Balancing Cube

A Cubli-inspired prototype that balances on its edge or corner using motor-driven reaction wheels and real-time motion control – built from accessible components and 3D-printed parts.



Best WOU Final Year Project Award

Jonas Ooi Yong Han

Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronics (Final Year)

Project: Movable Automated Tray Loader Unloader

A low-cost automation system that cuts manual handling, cycle-time delays, operator fatigue, and inconsistent product movement in robotic manufacturing.



Emerging STEAM Innovation Award

Dr Noorehan Binti Awang (UiTM Shah Alam)

MathAble: Where Every Ability Shines



Best Visual Communication Award

Yee Chin Chieh (Sunway College)

Aptive: AI Adaptive Study Planner with Quiz Generation



Best Sustainable Award

Teo Choon Yee (AeroGreen Asia Sdn Bhd)

AeroPod: AI and IoT Smart Urban Farming System

ON THE SHOWCASE FLOOR: MORE WOU PROJECTS



Thivellan A/L Mathavan (Electronics)

IoT Based Fire Detection System



Saravanan A/L Kaniapan (Electronics)

Robotic Hand Controller by Glove Using Wireless Communication



Nai Boon Mee Sararaks (Psychology)

Crystal Chakra Light & Frequency (Hz) Therapy for Health & Wellness Technology



Lee Jia Hong (Mechatronics)

A Spatial Thin-Client Architecture for Portable Augmented Reality Desktop Environments



Pavinraj A/L Ravi (Computer Systems and Networks)

IoT-Enabled Smart Nurse Call System for Private Nursing Home

FULL LIST OF AWARD WINNERS



Gold Award

Ho Khai Zhi (INTI)

Wall Painting Robot Using Hybrid Controller



Silver Award

Lim Xiao Syuen (Sunway University)

Designing Stable and Renewable Quasi-PAO Lubricants from Vegetable Oils



Bronze Award

Preedha a/p R. Govindasamy (Sunway University)

Designing Stable and Renewable Quasi-PAO Lubricants from Vegetable Oils



Judges' Special Award

Ts. Br. Mohd Dhiya Hafreez Bin Kamil (UiTM Perak)

Kontrak+: Digital Performance Monitoring for SME Contractors

WOU InnovateX 2026 was held in collaboration with MyDigitalMaker and supported by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), with Digital Penang as strategic sponsor and partners including the Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT) and the Technological Association Malaysia (TAM).

EVENTS

Through participation in industry, community and high-level policy discussions, WOU continues to share its expertise, build meaningful partnerships, and contribute to issues shaping society and the economy.

Celebrating a Partnership for Community Wellbeing



WOU Senior Student Recruitment Specialist Vincent Kang Wei Keong (second row, first from left) accepted the certificate on behalf of the University.

WOU joined Penang Adventist Hospital's Community Health Ambassadors Appreciation Luncheon on 5 April, celebrating the dedication of volunteers and partners supporting health awareness and community outreach across Penang.

The University was invited as one of the hospital's strategic partners in recognition of its continued support and collaboration with the Community Health Ambassadors programme. The initiative encourages members of the public to become health ambassadors within their communities, helping to raise awareness of common health issues and promote greater participation in preventive health activities.

Bringing together healthcare professionals, volunteers, educators and community partners, the luncheon reflected the importance of collaboration in building healthier and better-informed communities.

Continuous Reskilling Central to Business Reorganisation

WOU's Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa (pic) brought a higher education and talent-development perspective to the Employment Law Briefing 2026, organised by RDS Partnership at the WOU main campus on 17 April.

Joining industry and human resource leaders for the panel discussion, Rightsizing and Reorganisation of Business, Prof. Yap highlighted the importance of aligning workforce capabilities with changing business strategies, technologies and roles.

His participation drew attention to continuous skills development, reskilling and internal mobility as essential components of organisational transformation, alongside changes to business structures and workforce size.



Women's Leadership Key to an Inclusive Climate Economy

WOU's Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Lily Chan, moderated a high-level discussion on women's leadership in the green transition at the KSI World Women Economic and Business Summit 2026 on 15 June.

The panel session, Women, Sustainability and the Green Transition: Leading the Climate Economy, explored opportunities for women in green jobs, climate-smart entrepreneurship, sustainable finance and the circular economy.

Prof. Chan guided the discussion towards the skills pathways, access to capital, and institutional support required for women to take on greater leadership, innovation and ownership roles in the emerging climate economy.



Prof. Chan brings the panel together to examine how women can take a greater role in shaping the climate economy.

WOU TO HOST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTELLIGENT MANUFACTURING AND ROBOTICS IN PENANG

Regional university collaboration to showcase peer-reviewed research in AI-driven manufacturing and robotics innovation.



“As industries evolve through AI, automation, and advanced engineering technologies, universities and industry partners must work more closely to strengthen research networks, encourage joint outputs, and accelerate the translation of ideas into practical solutions. This conference provides an important platform to connect researchers and practitioners in ways that extend beyond the event itself, supporting sustained collaboration and enhancing the region’s innovation capacity,”

Wawasan Open University (WOU) is set to host the fourth instalment of the International Conference on Intelligent Manufacturing and Robotics 2026 (ICiMR 2026) at its main campus in Penang from 3 to 4 November 2026.

The hybrid conference is jointly organised by WOU, Sunway University, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU), Indonesia, with WOU serving as the lead organiser.

ICiMR 2026 will convene researchers, engineers, academics, postgraduate students, technology developers, and industry practitioners to share peer-reviewed research and practical insights in intelligent manufacturing, robotics, automation, and AI-driven industrial innovation.

Held against the backdrop of rapid digital transformation across the manufacturing and advanced engineering sectors, the two-day conference will feature keynote addresses, industrial roundtables, technical talks, and parallel research presentation sessions. The programme is designed to encourage cross-sector knowledge exchange and strengthen links between academic research and real-world industrial applications.

According to WOU’s Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa, the conference reflects the growing need for closer academia-industry collaboration in advancing research impact, innovation, and talent development.

The Conference Committee is inviting submissions of original research papers, industrial case studies, technological evaluations, and scientific project findings in areas such as intelligent manufacturing systems, robotics and automation, AI in industrial applications, smart factories and Industry 4.0, semiconductor and advanced engineering, and digital transformation in manufacturing.

Full papers must be submitted by 1 October 2026, and authors will receive notification of paper acceptance by 22 October 2026. Final camera-ready manuscripts are due on 29 October 2026, with registration and payment to be finalised by 30 October 2026.

Participation options are available for both presenting and non-presenting delegates, with physical and virtual attendance options. Local participation fees are RM650 for presenting delegates and RM250 for non-presenting delegates. International participation fees are USD250 for presenting delegates and USD100 for non-presenting delegates.

Abstracts and full manuscripts can be submitted through the official conference portal.

With Penang strengthening its position as a regional hub for semiconductor and advanced manufacturing, ICiMR 2026 is expected to further deepen academia-industry collaboration and support the development of high-skilled engineering and technology talent.

The conference also reinforces WOU’s commitment to industry-relevant research and its contribution to Malaysia’s broader digitalisation and advanced manufacturing agenda.

WOU AND POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES PARTNER TO SCALE DIGITAL OPEN AND DISTANCE E-LEARNING

Strategic MoU establishes a high-impact framework for cross-border research and academic initiatives, resource sharing, and innovation in digital pedagogy.



Prof. Yap delivers the Vice-Chancellor's speech at the virtual signing. On his right is Dean of School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Anna Christina Abdullah

Wawasan Open University (WOU) has formalised a strategic partnership with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) to accelerate the advancement of Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) and expand inclusive educational access across Southeast Asia.

The collaboration was officially established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed virtually on 17 April 2026. This five-year agreement creates a robust framework specifically designed to enhance the ODeL ecosystem bridging both institutions. Key areas of cooperation include joint academic research, faculty and student mobility, co-organisation of scholarly engagements, and the mutual sharing of digital educational resources to address the evolving needs of an AI-driven regional workforce.

Speaking on behalf of WOU, Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa emphasised that the partnership is a proactive response to the demands of a skills-based economy.

"There is a profound resonance between WOU's mission and PUP's commitment to inclusive, globally relevant education. In today's competitive landscape, continuous upskilling is the bedrock of professional resilience. This partnership underscores the vital role of cross-border education in driving national development and economic growth for both Malaysia and the Philippines. "By formalising these ties, we are now positioned to exchange best practices in digital pedagogy, create a 'global classroom' through mobility programmes, and spark collaborative innovation in the ODL space," he said.

PUP President, Dr. Manuel M. Muhi welcomed the partnership as a significant step in widening access to quality higher education through digital transformation.

"This moment signifies not only the beginning of a formal partnership but also a shared vision of advancing open, distance, and flexible learning in our respective institutions and across the region. In an era where learning transcends physical borders, such alliances enable us to exchange knowledge and innovate in delivering quality education to diverse learners.

"Through this partnership, we strengthen our commitment to an accessible and inclusive education, ensuring that learning opportunities reach those who need them most," he emphasised.

Moving forward, both institutions will leverage their respective expertise and resources to drive digital teaching and learning advancements that mutually benefit their academic communities and propel ODeL innovation in ASEAN.



Formalising the WOU–PUP partnership during the virtual MoU signing ceremony.



Prof. Yap and Prof. Anna with faculty members from the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences following the virtual MoU signing.

WOU AND PUP OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM LAUNCH FIRST ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT WITH VIRTUAL LECTURE



The OUSapin 2026: International Knowledge Exchanges in Open Distance and e-Learning online lecture, held on 18 April 2026, featured Associate Professor Dr. Dewi Amat Sapuan, Director of WOU's Centre for ODL Experiences (COLE), who detailed WOU's strategic roadmap in developing its digital learning platform, FlexLearn.

In her presentation, she explained the University's evolution from basic content migration to the current "FlexLearn 3.0" phase, which emphasises a human-centric learning management system that 'provides a continuously engaging environment, focusing on effective learning process and meaningful learning experiences'.

According to Dr. Dewi, this transition highlights WOU's shift from simply hosting digital materials such as PDF texts, flipbooks, and PowerPoint

slides to creating a high-engagement "Learning Enrichment" environment. She highlighted that ongoing enhancements are designed to make learning more inclusive, accessible, and immersive through gamification, as well as to support the platform's long-term scalability.

The digital evolution is supported by WOU's robust internal multidisciplinary team with a wealth of expertise in user interface, web design, digital learning design, learning technologies, and interaction experience design.

Dr. Dewi further emphasised the importance of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and technical accessibility as cornerstones of the ecosystem. By adhering to international standards such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.2, WOU ensures that its digital content is usable by everyone, including people with disabilities.

The knowledge exchange session, facilitated by WOU's School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHS) in collaboration with PUPOUS, concluded with both institutions reaffirming their commitment to advancing open and distance e-learning standards in the region.

WOU HOSTS PUP OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM FOR STRATEGIC BENCHMARKING VISIT



The benchmarking visit brought both teams together to share practices and explore new opportunities in open and distance learning.

Building on a shared vision for innovation in open distance education, Wawasan Open University (WOU) hosted a senior delegation from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University System (PUPOUS) for a comprehensive benchmarking visit on 29 April 2026. The visit served as a

practical follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by both institutions on 17 April 2026.

The PUPOUS delegation was led by Executive Director Dr. Rudolf Lacerna and Internationalisation Focal Person Dr. Pamela Muhi. The delegation also comprised Associate Professor Karen G. San Diego, Academic Programme Head; Dr. Diana Lee Tracy Chan, Chief of the Centre for Research and Extension; Richard Sana, Programme Coordinator; and Dr. John Mark Distor, Course Specialist.

The benchmarking visit included in-depth briefing sessions where Dean of the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHS), Professor Dr. Anna Christina Abdullah provided an institutional overview, while senior academics Associate Professor Dr. Tan Saw Fen and Associate Professor Ir. Dr. Arjuna Marzuki explored synergies in research and publications under the Centre for Research and Innovation (CeRI).

Further discussions led by Dean of the School of Graduate Studies Associate Professor Dr. Lee Heng Wei and SEHS Deputy Dean Dr. Sean Ooi focused on aligning postgraduate matters and colloquium standards.

A CELEBRATION OF RESILIENCE AND FUTURE AMBITION HONOURING WOU'S GRADUATES



Graduates, alumni, and staff across WOU's regional offices celebrate academic achievement and new possibilities ahead.

Wawasan Open University (WOU) celebrated the achievements of its April 2026 graduating cohort with a series of simultaneous alumni gatherings held at its regional offices nationwide on 25 April.

The celebrations brought WOU's newest graduates together with returning alumni, academics and prospective postgraduate learners, creating a lively occasion to recognise individual achievement while looking ahead to new academic and professional possibilities.

More than 200 graduates received qualifications ranging from diplomas and bachelor's degrees to doctoral degrees, reflecting the breadth of disciplines, backgrounds, and ambitions within the University's learning community.

A key highlight of the gatherings was the preview of WOU's refreshed Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme. Designed for working professionals, the postgraduate pathway offers graduates an opportunity to maintain their academic momentum while developing the strategic, analytical and leadership capabilities needed for career advancement.



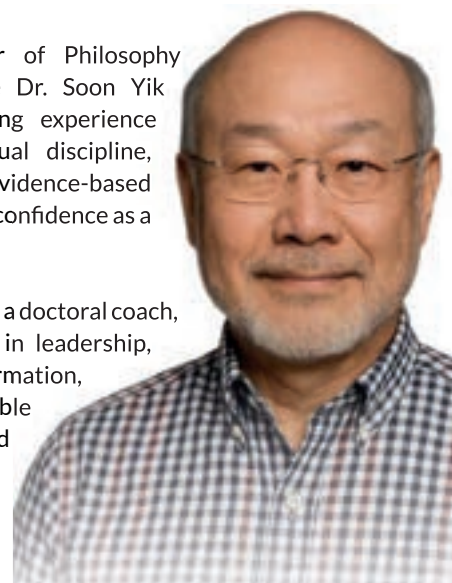
Graduates, alumni, and staff across WOU's regional offices celebrate academic achievement and new possibilities ahead.

BALANCING WORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Turning Professional Experience Into Scholarly Insight

AT the Ipoh Office, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education graduate Dr. Soon Yik Mean reflected on a fulfilling experience that sharpened his intellectual discipline, deepened his appreciation for evidence-based practice, and strengthened his confidence as a scholar-practitioner.

Balancing a diverse portfolio as a doctoral coach, and a trainer and consultant in leadership, management, and transformation, he valued WOU's flexible structure, which allowed him to pursue advanced research alongside his professional commitments.

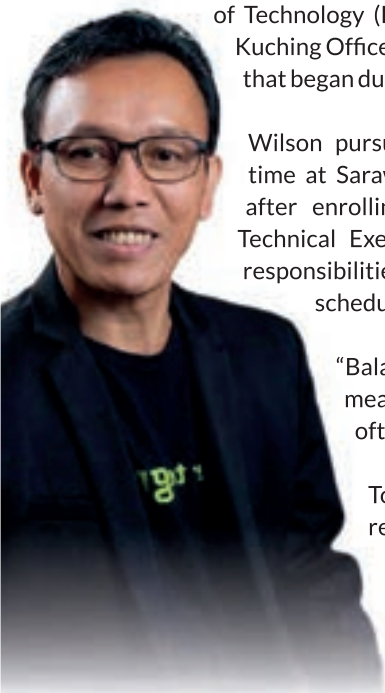


"The programme challenged me to think more critically, research more systematically, and write more analytically, while continuously linking theory with real-world educational practice.

"It was not merely a qualification journey, but a personal and professional transformation that has prepared me to contribute more meaningfully to education, leadership development, and lifelong learning," said Dr. Soon, who is currently pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration

Building Resilience Through Years of Commitment

IN East Malaysia, Wilson Anak Rimbit received his Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Electronics scroll at the Kuching Office, marking the completion of a journey that began during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



Wilson pursued his studies while working full-time at Sarawak Energy Berhad. Five years ago, after enrolling at WOU, he was promoted to Technical Executive, adding greater professional responsibilities to an already demanding study schedule.

“Balancing full-time work and studies meant having almost no weekends, which often caused stress and fatigue,” he said.

To remain on track, Wilson broke his responsibilities into smaller tasks, recorded them in short notes and completed them according to priority. This simple but consistent approach helped him manage competing academic and workplace demands.

Completing the degree has given him greater confidence and, he said, will serve as an important catalyst for his future career advancement.

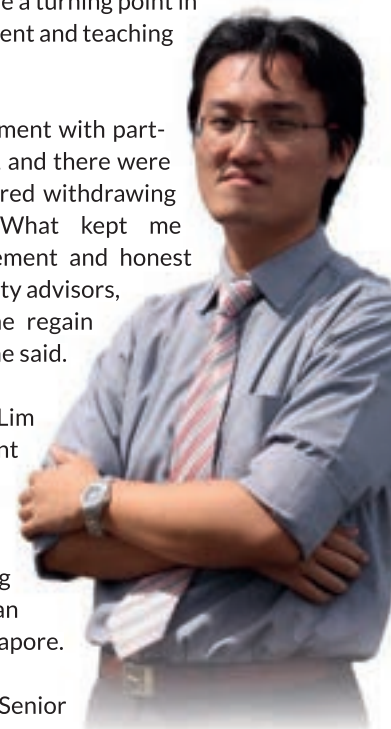
Perseverance That Opened New Career Doors

FOR Lim Tian Hwee, completing WOU’s Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) became a turning point in both his personal development and teaching career.

Balancing full-time employment with part-time study was demanding, and there were moments when he considered withdrawing from the programme. “What kept me going were the encouragement and honest conversations with university advisors, whose guidance helped me regain direction and confidence,” he said.

The experience helped Lim become a more resilient and reflective educator. It also contributed to an important professional breakthrough, enabling him to move into an international role in Singapore.

He now works as a Senior Academic Instructor at the Singapore Institute of Management, demonstrating how continuing education can support both personal growth and regional career mobility.



“The programme opened doors for me to secure employment in Singapore, affirming the impact of perseverance and strong support systems,” he said.

Connecting Digital Business with Leadership



BACHELOR of Digital Business (Honours) graduate Abdul Kader Bin Saifuddin is already applying his knowledge across marketing, customer experience, and emerging technology.

As Marketing Manager for loudspeaker brand SB Acoustics, he oversees the customer experience channels of its Asian distributor, Artisan Acoustics. His responsibilities include social media engagement, email communications, online brand monitoring, press releases, and event collateral for roadshows and trade shows.

Abdul Kader has also been exploring agentic artificial intelligence and its potential to improve business processes. He develops custom retrieval augmented generation systems and automates workflows using platforms such as n8n and OpenClaw, gaining practical insight into both the capabilities and limitations of large language models.

“It’s taught me a lot about the power and limits of LLMs, and I’ve gotten pretty good at making these systems behave reliably,” he said.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF LEARNING AND WOU

At the close of her seven-year tenure as WOU's Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Lily Chan shares her perspectives on the changing higher education landscape, the evolving role of open and distance learning, and the opportunities ahead for the University.

1. You have held leadership roles in both conventional and open and distance learning institutions. As technology increasingly blurs the distinction between the two, how do you see higher education evolving?

The distinction between conventional and open and distance learning is becoming less pronounced as universities adopt digital platforms, flexible delivery, and technology-supported teaching. However, flexibility involves more than moving content online. Institutions must rethink programme design, learner engagement, and support. They must also consider how assessment can better reflect the needs of today's learners.

Higher education will become more blended, personalised, and responsive. Learners will increasingly move between work and education throughout their lives. Universities that combine academic quality with genuine flexibility will be best positioned to meet these changing expectations.

2. What role should WOU play as skills needs and career pathways become less predictable?

WOU should position itself as a strategic partner in workforce transformation, helping individuals and industries navigate continuous change. Its role is not merely to respond to current skills gaps, but to anticipate emerging needs and shape learning pathways that remain relevant over time.

By bringing together academic expertise, industry insight, and the strengths of open and distance learning, WOU can widen access to high-quality education while supporting national and regional talent development. The University should continue evolving as a trusted institution where working professionals can renew their capabilities, gain recognised credentials, and remain competitive throughout their careers.

3. Looking ahead, what do you see as the most significant challenges and opportunities facing higher education, and where can WOU make its greatest contribution?

The greatest challenge is the growing mismatch between the pace at which the world is changing and the pace at which universities traditionally respond. Technology is reshaping jobs, while learners increasingly expect education to fit around careers and family responsibilities. Universities cannot afford to remain fixed in old structures, but neither should they chase every new trend at the expense of quality and purpose.

This is also where I see the greatest opportunity for WOU. The



University should not try to replicate conventional institutions. Its strength lies in understanding working adults and designing credible learning around the realities of their lives. By remaining agile, listening closely to industry, and offering pathways that support continuous progression, WOU can help people and organisations navigate change with greater confidence. Its contribution will be most meaningful when it turns flexibility into real advancement.

4. What has your time at WOU shown you about the difference flexible education can make in people's lives?

Education is most powerful when it changes not only what a person knows, but also what they believe is possible. At WOU, I have seen working adults return to learning after years away and persevere despite demanding professional and family responsibilities. Many emerge with greater confidence, renewed purpose, and new possibilities for their future.

A qualification may open the door to career advancement, but the impact often reaches much further. It can influence families, workplaces, and communities. This is why access alone is not enough. WOU must continue ensuring that flexible education leads to credible progression, meaningful opportunities, and lasting change in people's lives.

WOU extends its deepest appreciation to Prof. Dr. Lily Chan for her dedicated leadership and service to the University. We wish her every success in the next chapter of her journey.