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Engaging Students and Communities

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MOMENTUM

Advancing talent, industry and regional connections

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From the Vice Chancellor's Desk

Change rarely happens in neat, predictable steps. Technology advances, industries evolve, partnerships take shape, and the needs of learners and employers continue to shift.

For universities, staying relevant means responding to these changes while remaining focused on the people, industries, and communities they serve.

As WOU navigates its next phase of educational transformation, an adaptive approach is essential in shaping what lies ahead. This means paying close attention to changes in the world of work and aligning our response with the needs of learners, employers, and the workforce.

At the Sabah Asia-Pacific Impact Investing for Sustainable Development Summit - an initiative conceptualised by the Chairman of WOU's George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies, **Tan Sri Andrew Sheng** - I had the privilege of joining a distinguished panel discussing the role of education and Digital Public Infrastructure in transforming development ecosystems.

WOU's growing engagement with industry reflects this same need to connect learning with emerging capabilities. Our collaborations with Shanghai Real Thread Electronic Technology Co. and Penang-based industrial technology solutions provider Lingkail are opening avenues to strengthen expertise in Edge AI, embedded systems, IoT, and Industry 4.0.

On the academic front, we have signed Memoranda of Understanding with SPIC International College and the Singapore Institute of Management to expand learning opportunities for TVET talent, enterprises, and the broader workforce.

These connections are increasingly important as boundaries between education, industry, and professional development blur. Universities play a vital role in bridging knowledge and application, helping individuals build capabilities that remain relevant as technology and the nature of work evolve.

I am proud to note that **Associate Professor Dr Lee Heng Wei**, who heads the School of Business and Administration, the School of Graduate Studies, and the APEL Centre, played a key role in drafting the Guidelines on Academic Bank of Credit 2026, recently introduced by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA).

This development complements WOU's longstanding commitment to open and flexible pathways for learners balancing education with work and other responsibilities.

We also shine a spotlight on the School of Digital Technology, which marks five years of digital education and innovation through a series of practical workshops in digital tools. These community-focused initiatives reflect the School's commitment to creating opportunities for learners to build relevant digital skills.

WOU will also host the 4th International Conference on Intelligent Manufacturing and Robotics (ICiMR) 2026 on 3 and 4 November. We are grateful for the support of the Penang Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PCEB), and we hope the conference serves as a valuable platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration between academia and industry.

Each of these developments contributes to a wider momentum that empowers talent, deepens industry engagement, and extends connections across institutions and regions.

Ultimately, our focus remains firmly rooted on the ground by listening closely, responding to evolving needs, strengthening collaboration, and creating learning opportunities that make a genuine difference for the individual and the industry.

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Leading WOU's Next Chapter

With international experience in academic leadership and industry collaboration, Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa takes the helm of a university committed to widening opportunities for lifelong learners.

Helping learners succeed and bringing education closer to industry have been central to Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa's work since joining Wawasan Open University (WOU) in 2024. Now, as its fifth Vice-Chancellor, he takes on responsibility for guiding the University's next chapter.

His appointment as Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor took effect on 1 July 2026, succeeding Prof. Dr. Lily Chan, who led WOU for seven years. He brings international leadership experience and research expertise in engineering, sustainability, and complex systems analysis to the role.

For WOU's community of working adults and lifelong learners, his appointment continues the University's commitment to accessible, flexible education that connects academic learning with professional needs.

Prof. Yap joined WOU as Associate Vice-Chancellor before serving as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). During this time, he strengthened academic governance, including the establishment of the School of Graduate Studies and the Centre for Student Experience and Success.

He also led initiatives to improve programme quality, support student success, and strengthen the University's capabilities. Alongside this work, he helped align academic programmes more closely with Penang's growing digital and semiconductor ecosystems, deepening WOU's connections with industry.

These efforts reflect two closely connected priorities: supporting learners throughout their studies and ensuring that their education remains relevant to the opportunities and challenges they encounter at work.

Before joining WOU, Prof. Yap was the founding Dean at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University's (XJTLU) industry-integrated Taicang Campus in Suzhou, China. There, he led the creation and development of three industry schools: the School of Intelligent Manufacturing Ecosystem, School of Robotics, and School of CHIPS.

His academic leadership experience also spans the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Nottingham Malaysia, and University College London Australia. He remains a Visiting Professor at XJTLU.

Prof. Yap holds a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Marine Technology from the University of Plymouth, a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from University College London, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education from the University of Nottingham.

Chairman of WOU's Board of Governors, Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, said the appointment reinforces the University's commitment to lifelong learners and Malaysia's evolving talent requirements.

"Prof. Yap brings a potent combination of global academic leadership and a deep understanding of WOU's role in expanding opportunities for adult learners.

"As industrial demands shift, WOU bridges the gap between workforce capability and economic relevance. The Board is confident that under Prof. Yap's leadership, WOU will continue to strengthen its contribution to Malaysia's industrial transformation and nation-building agenda," he said.



From Factory Automation to Industrial Intelligence: Why Universities and Industry Must Work Together

By Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa

When we hear "smart manufacturing", we often think of robots working in factories. Yet automation is only part of the picture.

According to the International Federation of Robotics, 542,000 industrial robots were installed in 2024, more than double the number ten years earlier. Asia accounted for 74% of new deployments. But do more robots mean more intelligence? A robotised enterprise can still be inflexible, energy inefficient, and vulnerable to manufacturing risks or supply chain disruptions. Automation is an enabler of broader transformation, rather than the ultimate goal.

BEYOND ISOLATED MACHINES

Industrial intelligence brings technologies together to solve operational problems. Analytical AI can identify defects, recognise process drift, and predict equipment failure. Generative AI can help engineers understand technical documents, generate simulations, and communicate with machinery. Agentic AI can enable machinery to operate within narrow parameters of autonomy.

Digital twins allow manufacturers to test layouts, schedules, and control functions in a copy of the production environment, reducing implementation risks. The convergence of information technology and operational technology connects sensors, systems, models, and business processes to support continuous improvement.

These capabilities must address human needs. An AI recommendation still requires people to examine its context, assess its suitability, and determine responsibility for implementation. A system that performs well in trials may struggle with production variability, maintenance issues, or supply chain constraints. Cyber security, data privacy, and human health and safety must therefore be integral to its design. Robots and AI should take on tedious, dangerous, and physically demanding tasks so people can focus on creative and higher-level work. This calls for reconsidering employees' skills and responsibilities. A truly smart factory should be clean, safe, efficient, and ready for human-in-the-loop operation.

TURNING INVESTMENT INTO CAPABILITY

Malaysia recorded RM131.3 billion in approved manufacturing investments across 1,354 projects in 2025. These projects are expected to create 109,950 jobs, with almost half comprising managerial and technical positions. Capital and new facilities alone, however, will not move the country up the global value chain. Can SMEs integrate intelligent technologies into their workflows? Can universities and industry develop the talent and applied research these investments require?

The next question is whether local researchers, universities, SMEs, and talent can play a greater role in designing, developing, integrating, and owning industrial solutions.

WHY COLLABORATION MATTERS

To convert investment into capability, we must ask what problems technology should solve. How can equipment from different manufacturers work together? How can SMEs adopt technology while getting value from their investment? How can production become greener?

These questions extend to business models, education, training, governance, sustainability, and public policy. Universities can connect groups working across these priorities, test ideas in practice, and support the sharing of knowledge. No single company or institution can achieve this alone. Collaborative analysis, comparison of evidence, and constructive critique are needed to develop practical approaches that help shape the next era of manufacturing.

Read more of Prof. Yap's insights in the full commentary on the WOU Blog at wou.edu.my



ICiMR 2026
4th International Conference on Intelligent Manufacturing and Robotics
3–4 November 2026 | WOU Penang, Malaysia

Organised by WOU with Sunway University, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, ICiMR brings researchers and industry practitioners together to explore intelligent manufacturing, robotics, and practical industry applications.

Find out more at wou.edu.my/academia/icimr-2026/.

Connecting Capital and Skills

At Sabah AIMS 2026, Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa highlighted how open education and digital public infrastructure can build the capabilities needed to translate sustainable investment into lasting local outcomes.



Prof. Yap joined a high-level panel examining education and digital public infrastructure in transforming development ecosystems.

PANEL FOCUS

The role of education and digital public infrastructure in transforming development ecosystems

Prof. Yap placed the human capability behind digital systems at the centre of the discussion.

Co-organised by Wawasan Open University's George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS) and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah, the Sabah Asia-Pacific Impact Investing for Sustainable Development Summit 2026 convened more than 300 leaders from government, finance, industry, academia, and civil society in Kota Kinabalu last July.

The summit sought to mobilise capital for high-impact social and environmental projects, promote responsible business models, and position Sabah as a living laboratory for sustainable development.

As sustainable development in Southeast Asia shifts from ambition to implementation, lasting regional growth cannot simply be funded or imported. Long-term progress must be built from within by sharing knowledge, building local capabilities, and providing communities with essential digital tools.

EDUCATION AS DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Within this broader conversation, WOU Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa focused on what must happen after infrastructure and investment are secured: people and institutions need the capability to use them well. Digital public infrastructure can widen access to services, improve coordination, and strengthen data exchange. Yet technology alone does not determine whether development initiatives succeed. Users must be able to interpret information, govern systems, and make responsible decisions in their communities.

THE HUMAN LAYER BEHIND DIGITAL SYSTEMS

This human layer matters across the development chain. Local enterprises need the confidence to work with data, public agencies need the governance knowledge to manage shared systems, and community organisations need the skills to evaluate whether solutions respond to conditions on the ground.

FROM DIGITAL ACCESS TO PRACTICAL CAPABILITY

Education helps close the gap between having digital tools and applying them effectively. Universities can translate research, data, and local evidence into practical training, applied projects, and policy insights. This allows public agencies, businesses, and community organisations to move from information to informed action.

Prof. Yap also emphasised that technology creates reach, but people still provide judgement. Sustainable development therefore requires a learning system that strengthens both technical competence and the ability to understand local conditions.



Prof. Yap joined a high-level panel examining education and digital public infrastructure in transforming development ecosystems.

THE HUMAN LAYER

"Technology creates reach. Education develops the judgement and capability needed to use it responsibly.

LEARNING WHERE DEVELOPMENT HAPPENS

Open and distance learning can reach dispersed communities without drawing people away from where their experience and participation matter most.

WOU's flexible delivery, structured support, and recognised pathways allow working adults and community leaders to build capability alongside their existing responsibilities.

SKILLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Sustainable industries need professionals who can connect science, policy, and business, and assess how technical choices affect communities and the environment.

WOU's sustainability education reflects this need, connecting artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, energy systems, environmental assessment, green building, advanced materials, and innovation.

TURNING INVESTMENT INTO LASTING OUTCOMES

Prof. Yap returned the summit's investment agenda to the people responsible for delivery. Capital may launch a project, but lasting value depends on whether local organisations can operate, govern, and adapt it.

Flexible higher education helps professionals develop that capability as conditions change. Investment addresses what can be financed; education addresses who will make it work.

13–14 JULY 2026
The Magellan Sutera, Kota Kinabalu

OVER 300 DELEGATES
Government, finance, industry, academia, and civil society

TURN, LEARN, EARN
Summit theme

CO-ORGANISED BY
George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies, WOU and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah

GIOAS AS A REGIONAL CONVENOR



Tan Sri Sheng delivers his opening remarks at the summit.

Open and distance learning can reach dispersed communities without drawing people away from where their experience and participation matter most.

WOU's flexible delivery, structured support, and recognised pathways allow working adults and community leaders to build capability alongside their existing responsibilities.

WOU AT THE SUMMIT



WOU also engaged delegates through its exhibition booth, connecting the summit's development agenda with flexible learning and sustainability education pathways.

Deputy Dean of WOU's School of Technology and Engineering Science, Associate Professor Ts. Dr. Lee Yong Siang (pic above) discussed options ranging from professional certification to postgraduate study.

Skills for Industry, Path

A GLOBAL–LOCAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDGE AI AND INDUSTRY 4.0 UPSKILLING



The MoU marks a new chapter in collaboration between WOU and RT-Thread in advancing Edge AI, embedded systems, and Industry 4.0 upskilling.

Wawasan Open University (WOU) has signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Shanghai Real-Thread Electronic Technology Co., Ltd. (RT-Thread) and Lingkail Sdn Bhd (Lingkail) to strengthen the regional talent pipeline across Edge AI, embedded systems, the Internet of Things (IoT), and Industry 4.0 technologies.

The strategic partnerships draw on RT-Thread's open-source embedded systems ecosystem and Lingkail's on-the-ground experience in industrial digitalisation and smart manufacturing to translate emerging technologies into practical workforce capabilities and industry applications.

Under the agreement with RT-Thread, both parties will explore opportunities in knowledge exchange, professional training, certification programmes, customised corporate training, industry workshops, and collaborative research in embedded systems and IoT technologies.

Concurrently, the collaboration with Penang-based Lingkail aims to help organisations build internal capabilities for smart manufacturing, connected factories, and digital transformation.

The agreements were signed at WOU on 1 August 2026 by WOU Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa, RT-Thread Head of University Partnership Mr. Luo Qixi, and Lingkail Director Dr. Leow Cheah Wei.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Prof. Yap said the collaborations would connect technology expertise with practical workforce development.

By combining our partners' technical and industrial experience with WOU's academic quality, learning design, and flexible delivery, we can develop targeted programmes that respond to specific operational needs and support organisations in building the capabilities required for Industry 4.0 adoption," he said.

Both collaborations will be implemented through WOU Academy, the University's corporate training arm.

NEW ROUTES FROM TVET TO A DEGREE

WOU Academy, the executive education arm of Wawasan Open University (WOU), and SPIC International College (SPIC), a leading vocational training centre specialising in beauty and wellness education, have formalised a strategic partnership to create stronger progression pathways and expand professional development opportunities for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) talent.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by WOU Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa and SPIC Founder and Chancellor Rehneel Leow at SPIC's headquarters on 28 August 2026.

A key area of cooperation is the establishment of an articulation pathway for local and international students enrolled in SPIC diploma programmes to progress into WOU's Professional Certification and accredited degree programmes, subject to the candidate's eligibility.

In his address, Prof. Yap said the partnership reflects WOU's commitment to recognising diverse learning pathways and widening opportunities for TVET learners to progress professionally and academically through the University.

"TVET learners deserve equal recognition and genuine opportunities to advance. We are here to support their progression by building on their hands-on expertise with additional credentials, business knowledge, and management capabilities that can help them move forward professionally," he said.

WOU and SPIC representatives celebrate the new partnership together with SPIC students following the MoU signing ceremony.



ways for Talent

WOU AND SIM CONNECT LEARNING WITH INDUSTRY PRIORITIES



The MoU paves the way for closer collaboration in continuing education, academic pathways, and workforce upskilling across Malaysia and Singapore.

Wawasan Open University (WOU) and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) are bringing together their strengths to expand learning and professional development opportunities between Malaysia and Singapore.

A Memorandum of Understanding signed at WOU's main campus on 3 September 2026 sets out a three-year framework covering Continuing Education and Training (CET), academic pathways, student mobility, internships, and work-based learning.

The partners will share academic expertise, learning resources, and market insights to develop programmes responsive to learner and employer needs.

WOU Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa said closer regional economic integration would require professionals able to work across markets and lead distributed teams.

"By combining WOU's regional reach, understanding of the Malaysian market, and expertise in designing online learning with SIM's educational strengths in leadership and management training and extensive networks, we can expand accessible learning pathways while building stronger professional connections between the two countries," he said.

SIM Group Limited President and Chief Executive Officer Professor Wei Kwok Kee said the partnership was about creating greater possibilities for learners and connecting learning to opportunity.

Following the ceremony, the SIM delegation visited DiGiT at WOU's city campus for a demonstration of the ClassIN hybrid learning platform. Representatives from both institutions also discussed the delivery of CET and pre-employment training programmes.

INDUSTRY DIALOGUE SETS THE STARTING POINT

To help shape their collaboration, WOU and SIM engaged industry leaders on employers' priorities in Penang and continuing education opportunities for adult professionals across the region.

Held at WOU's Homestead Mansion on 4 September 2026, the roundtable drew perspectives from industry leaders representing Soon Soon Group, Lingkail, Sophic Automation, and Greatech.

Understanding the employer came first. Soon Soon Group Managing Director Dato' Dr. Neoh Soon Bin urged education providers to examine companies' training needs before designing programmes.

"Focus on the organisations that employ people, not the individual learners," he emphasised.

SIM Academy Chief Executive Officer Ho Seong Kim explained how real projects, team learning, and coaching help employees apply new knowledge. Management support is equally important.

"The system needs to work in tandem with the learning in order to create a change."

Such support must include those who can approve resources and sustain implementation. Lingkail Director Dr. Leow Cheah Wei noted that recognising a need does not necessarily mean having the authority to act.

The discussion also explored Southeast Asian management capabilities, including the ability to work across cultures, languages, and business environments.

These insights gave WOU and SIM a clearer understanding of industry priorities as they explore how their partnership can support workforce development and regional business needs.



Employees also need opportunities to apply what they learn to real-world challenges within a supportive organisational environment, the dialogue heard.

WOU-led Conference on Smart Manufacturing and Robotics Endorsed by Penang State Government



Penang State Government's support for ICiMR 2026 highlights the conference's relevance to the state's ambitions in advanced manufacturing and semiconductor development.

The 4th International Conference on Intelligent Manufacturing and Robotics (ICiMR 2026) has received Penang State Government support through the Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB). Wawasan Open University (WOU) will host the conference on 3–4 November 2026, connecting international researchers and industry practitioners with Penang's manufacturing sector.

Penang State Executive Councillor for Tourism and Creative Economy YB Wong Hon Wai highlighted the conference's alignment with the state's electrical and electronics sector and growing capabilities in integrated circuit design, advanced packaging, semiconductor equipment, automation, and AI-enabled manufacturing.

"ICiMR 2026 is therefore highly relevant to Penang. It will bring researchers, academics, engineers, subject specialists, technology developers, and industry practitioners together to examine how emerging technologies can be translated into practical applications that improve productivity, operational resilience, quality, sustainability, and workforce capability," he said.

Discussions will examine how emerging technologies can improve productivity, quality, sustainability, and workforce capability. For manufacturers, the emphasis is on applications that address practical challenges in their operations.

WOU is organising the hybrid conference with Sunway University, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Participants can register to attend either in person or online.

For more information, visit wou.edu.my/academia/icimr-2026/

UMS Looks to WOU's Experience in Flexible Learning

WOU's experience in open and distance learning (ODL) and microcredentials served as a benchmark for the Universiti Malaysia Sabah Flexible Education Centre (UMSFLEC) in its efforts to strengthen the governance and delivery of flexible education.

The delegation, comprising Manager of Digital Learning Mohd Rajiskanah bin Atin, Assistant Manager of Digital Learning Tc. Mohd Zulfadhlee bin Abdul Nasyir, and Digital Learning Coordinator Aminuddin Ibrahim Lastar, visited WOU on 21 July 2026 to learn from the University's practices.

WOU Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Associate Professor Ts. Dr. Sean Tan introduced the University and its approach to flexible learning, setting the context for briefings by Director of the Centre for ODL Experiences Associate Professor Dr. Dewi Amat Sapuan and Head of WOU Academy Steven Khor.

The benchmarking agenda focused on how flexible learning is managed, from digital learning governance and ODL student administration to the coordination of lecturers, facilitators, and course developers. Other areas of interest included policies, standard operating procedures, and quality assurance, alongside the infrastructure and technology used to support digital learning. The discussion also covered payment and incentive mechanisms, risk management, and sustainability.

A question-and-answer session provided an opportunity for the delegation to seek clarification on WOU's practices and consider their relevance to UMS's own implementation.



When Learning Becomes Portable

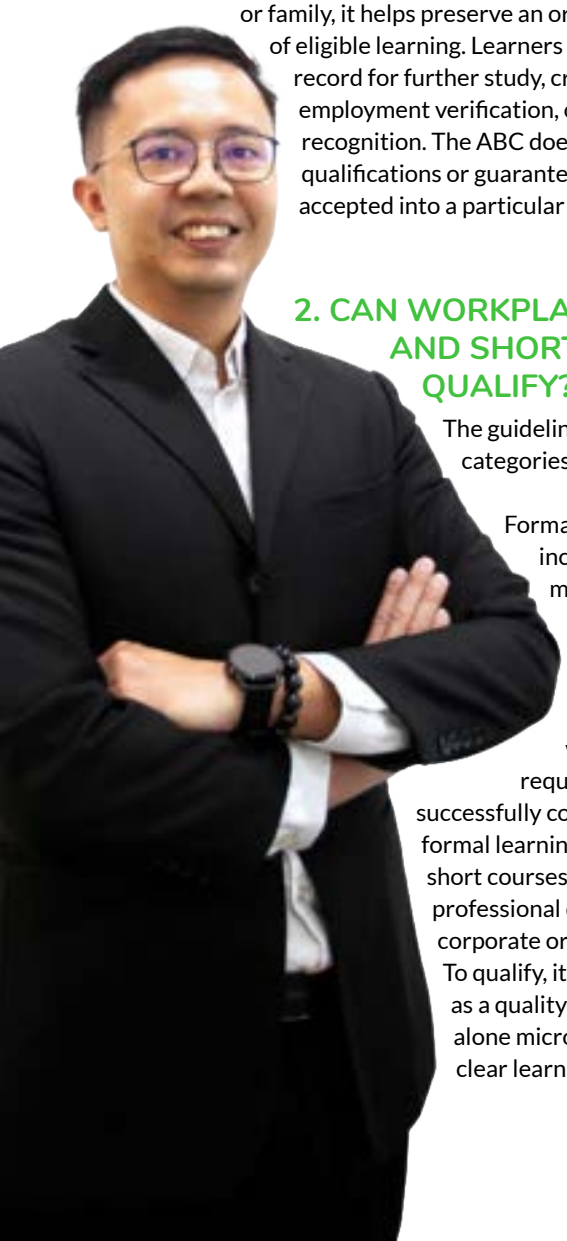
Understanding the Academic Bank of Credit: What Learners Need to Know

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency's Guidelines on Academic Bank of Credit 2026 introduce a national framework for recording verified academic credits earned through eligible microcredentials.

Associate Professor Dr. Lee Heng Wei, a member of the panel that developed the guidelines, answers five questions about what the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) means for learners.

1. WHAT IS THE ABC, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The ABC is a centralised, secure digital repository that brings verified credits from eligible microcredentials together in one lifelong Academic Credit Record (ACR). For working adults whose studies may span several institutions and pauses for work or family, it helps preserve an organised record of eligible learning. Learners may present this record for further study, credit transfer, employment verification, or professional recognition. The ABC does not award qualifications or guarantee that credits will be accepted into a particular programme.



2. CAN WORKPLACE TRAINING AND SHORT COURSES QUALIFY?

The guidelines recognise two categories of eligible learning:

Formal learning includes unbundled microcredentials drawn from accredited academic programmes, with the required assessment successfully completed. Non-formal learning may include short courses, workshops, professional development, and corporate or certified training. To qualify, it must be offered as a quality-verified stand-alone microcredential with clear learning outcomes, appropriate assessment, and valid evidence of achievement. A certificate alone does not establish eligibility. All records must be supported by authentic, verifiable evidence. The ABC records demonstrated learning, not attendance alone.

3. CAN RECORDED CREDITS AUTOMATICALLY COUNT TOWARDS A QUALIFICATION?

No. Recording credits and transferring them into a qualification are separate processes. The receiving university must assess their suitability, considering learning outcomes, academic level, credit value, course content, assessment, programme relevance, and whether the knowledge remains current. Credits deposited in the ABC are generally valid for ten years from the date of deposit. Older credits may be considered where the knowledge or skills remain relevant, subject to further evaluation. A single-redemption principle also applies. Credits successfully transferred into and used for a completed programme cannot ordinarily be used again towards another qualification.

4. WHAT DOES LEARNES OWNERSHIPS MEAN?

The ACR belongs to the learner rather than one institution. Learners generally decide when to share it with universities, employers, professional bodies, or other authorised organisations. Third parties normally require consent to access or disclose the record. The guidelines require secure handling and access only for authorised purposes. Learners must also review their records, check personal details and credit deposits, and report missing, duplicated, or inaccurate information.

5. WILL CREDITS EARNED THROUGH WOU BE RECORDED?

Credits from WOU may be recorded when the microcredential and institutional processes meet the framework's requirements. Not every course, workshop, or short programme is automatically eligible. Learners should check whether a WOU microcredential carries academic credit, is eligible for ABC deposit, relates to a recognised progression pathway, and may be considered for credit transfer. Using those credits towards a WOU qualification remains subject to the University's academic policies and programme requirements.

The full version of this article is available under the Blog section at wou.edu.my

ABOUT THE EXPERT

Associate Professor Dr. Lee Heng Wei is Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, Dean of the School of Business and Administration, and Head of Academic APEL at WOU. He holds a PhD in Management and a Master of Arts in Technology Management, and serves as an evaluation panel member for the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

Celebrating Five Years of Advancing Literacy Through Community-Focussed Upskilling

Three-part workshop series builds practical capabilities in AI-powered design, digital content creation, and data analysis and visualisation

The School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) at Wawasan Open University (WOU) marked its fifth anniversary with hands-on workshops held from June to September 2026, training 90 participants in AI-assisted content creation, digital storytelling, and data analytics.

Organised with the Penang Youth Development Corporation (PYDC), the series extended DiGiT's academic expertise to Penang's youth and the wider community, with active participation from Penang Youth Volunteers.

Kicking off the series on 6 June, the Canva AI workshop saw participants generate captions and promotional messages, create posters and social media graphics, and develop a one-week content plan. They were also introduced to short-form video production using CapCut.

The YouTube content creation workshop on 5 July explored using AI to generate video ideas, develop scripts, and optimise titles and descriptions. Participants also learnt to repurpose content across platforms.

Closing the series on 5 September, the Power BI workshop covered importing and cleaning data, building interactive dashboards, and producing visual reports to support better decision-making.

Dean of DiGiT, Assoc. Prof. Ts. Dr. Tan Kian Lam (Andrew), said the series reflected the School's commitment to helping the community build practical digital and AI capabilities.

"We want participants to learn by doing, applying digital and AI tools to real-world cases, solving problems, improving productivity, and creating outcomes that are relevant to their work, businesses, and everyday lives."

The series was supported by Deputy Dean Dr. Racheal Poh, Dr. Jayaeswari Sangaralingam, Dr. Yeoh Shwu Chyi, Mohd Hafiz Bin Mohamad Zahari, Muhammad Zunnasri, Nor Athira Binti Azlan, and Farah Wahidah Binti Kamarudin, who contributed to planning, coordination, and delivery.

In its media statement, PYDC highlighted the opportunities digital skills could create for young people.

"Mastering digital skills not only improves young people's task-handling and problem-solving abilities but also opens up more educational, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities," it said.

Supported by the WOU AI Centre as a platform for AI-related training and engagement, DiGiT welcomes further collaboration with industry, government agencies, and community partners to extend practical digital learning across Penang and beyond.



Hands-on learning in action as participants use Canva's AI tools to develop their own content.



Participants and facilitators come together to celebrate DiGiT's fifth anniversary through a series of community-focused digital upskilling workshops.

WordPress Campus Connect Makes Penang Debut at WOU

Digital learning met real-world application at Wawasan Open University (WOU) as it hosted Penang's first-ever WordPress Campus Connect on 24 September 2026.

Held at the Bangunan Wawasan city campus, home to the School of Digital Technology (DiGiT), the programme attracted 30 students and industry practitioners for a hands-on introduction to open-source web development.

Organised in partnership with the local WordPress community, the interactive workshop focused on equipping learners with real-world technical skills through targeted sessions:
Expert Insights: Trainer Yong Li and Principal Digital Architect Julian Song led sharing sessions covering practical WordPress and web development knowledge.

Interactive Q&A: An open format allowed participants to troubleshoot concepts directly with speakers and organisers.
Community Pathways: Attendees explored upcoming WordCamps and Meetups, sparking student interest in establishing a dedicated WOU WordPress Students Club.
To support practical learning, web hosting provider Exabytes sponsored one year of its WP 17 AI Business hosting plan for 20 WOU students, giving them direct access to professional digital infrastructure.

The inaugural Penang event was organised by Ben Leow, with support from WOU's Bachelor of Digital Business (Honours) graduate Abdul Kader Saifuddin as co-organiser, and DiGiT Senior Lecturer Mohd Hafiz Mohamad Zahari as university liaison.

Through this collaborative initiative, DiGiT continues to provide students and working professionals with opportunities to build technical competencies and connect with the wider tech community.



All smiles as WordPress Campus Connect makes its Penang debut at WOU!

DiGiT Empowers Form 5 Students Ahead of SPM

DiGiT extended its youth outreach to SMK Convent Green Lane on 26 September, where Senior Lecturer Dr. Jayaeswari Sangaralingam addressed students and parents at a school townhall.

Titled *A Moment to Reflect, Not a Reason to Give Up*, the session centred on collaborative strategies for SPM examination preparation.

Dr. Jaya highlighted the shared responsibilities between students and families, urging learners to take charge of their academic progress while emphasising the vital role of parental support and guidance during high-stakes revision periods.



Dr. Jaya encouraged students to take greater ownership of their preparation and progress ahead of the SPM examination.



A Day of Learning and Royal Engagement



Their Royal Highnesses join students, teachers, YTSP representatives, and WOU leaders for a group photograph in front of Homestead Mansion.

On 19 August 2026, Wawasan Open University (WOU) welcomed 100 secondary school students and selected prefects from Perlis for an interactive English workshop, followed by a Royal Hi-Tea at Homestead Mansion.

ENGLISH IN ACTION

Organised in collaboration with Yayasan Tuanku Syed Putra Perlis (YTSP), the workshop brought practical English learning into a lively group setting.

Students were divided into teams representing different Malaysian states. Drawing on food, culture, traditions, places of interest, and traditional attire, each team developed a visual presentation before sharing its ideas in English.

The workshop was led by WOU's Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS), with support from academics from the School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (SEHS), School of Business and Administration (SBA), and School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE).

Through the activities, students exchanged ideas, expanded their vocabulary, practised spoken communication, and built confidence in presenting before an audience.

A ROYAL VISIT TO HOMESTEAD

The programme continued with a Royal Hi-Tea at Homestead Mansion, graced by DYTM Raja Muda Perlis Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail, Raja Muda Perlis and Chairman of YTSP, and DYTM Raja Puan Muda Perlis Tuanku Dr. Hajah Lailatul Shahreen Akashah Khalil.

Their Royal Highnesses were welcomed by Wawasan Education Foundation Chairman Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa, and members of the University's leadership.

The visit concluded with a commemorative memento presentation and group photographs with students and university representatives.



Students exchange ideas as they prepare their group presentations.



WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon presents a commemorative memento to DYTM Raja Muda Perlis.

Your Work Can Wait: Why Caregiving Begins with Presence

Counselling Skills for Everyday Relationships

By Brian John Dorai, School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHS)

Most people do not want you to solve the problem. They simply want to be heard.

When someone is distressed, the task in front of us can often wait; the emotion sitting beside us may not.

Caregiving often begins with the desire to help. Yet we may start thinking of solutions too quickly, before listening to how the person feels or understanding the whole situation.

The skills used in counselling are useful when supporting an older person at home, listening to someone who feels lonely, or helping a friend through a difficult day.



UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF CAREGIVING

Expecting caregivers to be endlessly patient is unrealistic. They can become tired, irritated, worried, guilty, or emotionally drained. Self-awareness matters. A pause, a short walk, or a moment away can prevent frustration from becoming hurtful words. Before responding, ask: Am I trying to understand or correct? Am I calm enough to continue? Care must also be genuine. Technique alone is not enough. The person must feel that the attention given is sincere.

LISTENING BEFORE ADVICE

People may already have options in mind but need space to speak before facing them. Listening helps them process their feelings. Body language is part of communication:

- Sit comfortably and non-threateningly. A slightly angled position may feel less intense than sitting directly face to face.
- Use open posture to show that you are available.
- Lean forward naturally and respectfully.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact without staring.
- Remain visibly present. Checking your phone or the time can make the person feel unimportant.

Open-ended questions invite more than a yes-or-no answer. Paraphrasing shows understanding, while reflecting feelings helps name what the person may be feeling. Guidance may still be needed, but some issues require professional, medical, or mental health support.

EMPATHY, BOUNDARIES, AND SELF-CARE

Empathy involves sensing another person's emotions and responding with care. Even if you have experienced something similar, keep the focus on the person in distress. Caregiving does not mean carrying another person's entire problem. You can listen, support, and encourage, while their decisions remain their own. Self-care is part of caregiving. Take breaks, speak to someone trusted, practise self-compassion, and recognise your limits. Sometimes, the most helpful response is not a perfect answer. It is a few minutes of sincere attention or a simple act of kindness. Caregiving begins when the person in distress feels heard, understood, and less alone.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian John Dorai is a Senior Lecturer at SEHS, WOU, and a registered counsellor with the Malaysian Board of Counsellors. He holds a Master in Counselling from Universiti Sains Malaysia and a Bachelor of Psychology from HELP University College.

How a Corporate Management Graduate Developed Engineering Expertise Through WOU's Mechatronics Degree

Stepping out of her comfort zone, a corporate management graduate embraced WOU's flexible learning to navigate the unfamiliar world of engineering and build the confidence to lead.

After completing her first degree in corporate management, Seng Choi Yee began her career in recruitment, sourcing talent and managing contracted teams for multinational tech clients. Engineering was not part of her original plan.

That changed in 2014, when she joined Prestige Dynamics Industries, a precision plastic injection moulding company founded by her parents-in-law. Initially handling logistics, her responsibilities expanded to purchasing, marketing, and eventually engineering.

For the 38-year-old Penangite, the widening scope showed how customer requirements, supply chain decisions, and production processes were connected. It also exposed the limits of learning through workplace experience alone.

A PROJECT THAT SPARKED HER INTEREST

Around 2015, Choi Yee became the main customer contact and project lead for an automotive sensor project involving the company's first automated, high-volume production line. Her husband led the technical set-up, while she coordinated the timeline and customer communication.

"The technical details were unavoidable. I realised I could understand much of what was being discussed, and that was when my interest in engineering began to grow."

She began studying engineering independently but found that self-directed learning lacked the structure and consistency she needed.

FINDING STRUCTURE THROUGH WOU

In 2017, she enrolled in Wawasan Open University's (WOU) Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronics. The flexible, part-time programme allowed her to continue working while developing a stronger technical foundation.

"I had been learning on my own, but that often meant studying only when I felt like it. I needed the discipline to push myself further."

Subjects covering measurement and geometric dimensioning and tolerancing (GD&T) helped her understand the engineering principles behind workplace methods. Learning about programmable logic controllers (PLCs) coincided with the company's implementation of PLCs.

"WOU helped me understand the subjects from beginning to end. I became more confident discussing technical matters with customers and people across the supply chain."

Combining theoretical learning with industry experience, she developed a Cubli-inspired Self-Balancing Cube for her final-year project. It earned her the Most Market-Ready Innovation Award at WOU InnovateX 2026, the University's annual innovation competition.

GROWING INTO LEADERSHIP

As her technical understanding developed, Choi Yee became better equipped to explain engineering issues and connect commercial requirements with production realities.

In January 2020, after six years with Prestige Dynamics Industries, she was appointed Programme Director.

"The learning changed the way I spoke about technical matters and approached problems. Engineering involves a great deal of logical thinking, and I found that it improved the way I think even outside engineering."

Completing the degree over almost nine years reflected how she adapted her studies to her work and personal life.

For Choi Yee, the journey was about gaining knowledge she could apply.

"I was doing it for the knowledge, not only the certification. Further study felt more relevant after I entered the industry because I could connect what I was learning with the real world."

Seng Choi Yee at work

