

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Closing the gap between skills needed and taught

FOR working people, especially in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry, learning on the job (experiential learning) is suitable for them to be trained and adjust faster to the environment while improving work-related skills and competencies.

A study revealed that Malaysia is experiencing a shortage of professionals and skilled workers, especially in science and technology (S&T) or ICT-dependent industries.

Computer technology is responsible for nearly two-thirds of the 1.3 million jobs demanded by S&T industries.

However, Malaysia can supply not more than 50 per cent of this demand.

Aligning itself with international standards and inculcating market needs in ICT, Asia e University (AeU) has introduced a new work-based learning (WBL) programme: Bachelor of Technology (Information Technology) with Honours or BTech (IT) (Hons).

In addition to classroom lessons, this programme allows students to earn additional credit through hours spent on a work site. Hence, the

marks earned are recognised as part of the course assessment.

WBL sets an understanding between the supervisor at the industries and the university on what is the required skill sets, experiential learning, assessment tools and knowledge content that are supposed to be covered in the university curriculum.

The engagement of the industries is at the entire phases of the student development, including the work assignment and assessment, teaching and learning.

In this manner, the university can close gaps between the skill sets needed by the industries against what is taught and offered to students in the university.

The assignments given to the students are designed towards the nature of the work.

The BTech (IT) is one of the latest programmes designed and offered by the School of Information and Communication Technology (SICT) at AeU. This programme opens new opportunity for students to further study by using their job and working experiences through the WBL mode.

Students will benefit from the collaboration that has been established between AeU and ICT players in technologies ranging from multimedia, creative media, software development and telecommunications.

WBL is ideal for working students as it recognises and matches the learning outcome of the course to the work experience and the activities or output resulting from the workplace.

There are many graduates from diploma certificates who are in the IT industry.

The programme was formulated by incorporating the emerging fields in ICT, such as computer network security, web and mobile computing, service oriented architecture, and software development.

These are the elements essential to produce graduates who are capable of managing large scale communication network and security, build mobile applications for iPad and Android-based devices, cloud computing and other areas.

Students are required to produce three IT prototypes in the projects that will ensure the ability in the technical knowledge and its application for business uses.

BTech's graduates are sought after by industries including banking, finance, insurance, IT consultancy, telecommunication, education and services.

The ICT industry provides many career choices for its graduates that ranging from Business System Analyst, Computer Software or Hardware Engineer, Computer and Information Systems Manager, Computer Programmer, Computer Support Specialists, Network Systems Analyst, Computer Network Engineer, Solution Architect, Software or Web Developer to Web Master.

Annur Hadi Hashim, an ICT student at AeU, said: "AeU has equipped me with knowledge that I need to succeed in my job.

"Constant interaction with my coursemates and academic facilitators on industrial-related issues in local and international landscapes always excite me and make it more interesting to learn.

"AeU's advanced facilities, like the Knowledge Centre and ICT lab, provide resources that meet my learning needs, and materials that can be accessed at my own convenience. Its blended learning motivates me and makes learning enjoyable as I can apply what I learned to my work and project."

Prof Dr Syed Malek Fakar Duani, dean of SICT,



Professor Dr Syed Malek Fakar Duani of AeU says work-based learning is not new in global practices

said: "Work-based learning is not new in the global practices in countries such as Australia, the US and UK and many researches have been conducted to study the impact on graduate profiles, work efficiencies, experiential and learning curves that seen significant contribution to higher employee loyalties, staff retention, salary scale and productivity.

"BTech (IT) uses WBL pedagogy for college or school leavers who are on the job with working experience related to Information and Communication Technology."

Admissions can be applied through the normal entry path or open entry paths.

For the normal entry path, candidates should have an A Level, STPM or diploma or equivalent.

Through the open entry path, AeU provides a flexible admission system for part-time study mode only that is based on Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) concept, where industry experiences and professional certifications are given due credit value and carry weightage in their application.

The open entry requirement for BICT programme specifies that candidate must be at least 21 years old and possess a minimum PMR/SRP/LCE or equivalent, with recognised working experience.

AeU is a collaborative multinational university established under the auspices of the 33 Asia Cooperation Dialogue Countries (ACD). All academic programmes are internationally benchmarked, approved by the Education Ministry and accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

There are three intakes annually: January, May and September. AeU offers financial incentives and assistance in getting financial aids, such as PTPN loans and deductions from EPF.

For details, call 1-300-300-238, or apply online at www.aeu.edu.my