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 (on-the-job training) 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 3.3 million jobs demanded by S&T industries. However, Malaysian can supply not more than 50 per cent of this demand.

Aging skills with international standards and declining market needs in ICT, Asia University (AU) has introduced a work-based learning (WBL) programme Bachelor of Technology in Information Technology (B.Tech 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 in the industries and the university on what is 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 heart 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 B.Tech IT is one of the latest programmes designed and offered by the School of Information and Communication Technology (SICT) at AU.

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 AU and ICT players in technology 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 graduate from diploma certificate 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 iPhone 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.

B.Tech IT graduates are sought after by industries including banking, finance, insurance, IT consultancy, telecommunications, education and service.

The IT Industry provides many, and often, flexible choices for its graduates that range from Business Systems Analyst, Computer Software or Network Engineer, Computer and Information Systems Manager, Computer Programmer, System Support Analyst, Computer Network Systems Engineer, Network Engineer, Solution Architect, Software or Web Developer to Web Master.

Amran Haji Hashmi, an ICT student at AU, said, "AU has equipped me with knowledge that I need to succeed in my life. Constant interaction with my classmates and academic lecturers orientated-related issues in local and international landscapes always excite me and make it more interesting to learn. AU’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. My blended learning motivates me and makes learning enjoyable as I can apply what I learned to my work and project.”

Prof Dr Syed Malek Rukun Othman, dean of SICT, said: "Work-based learning is not new in the global practices in countries such as Australia, the US and UK. Many researchers have been conducted to study the impact on graduate profiles, work efficiency, experiential and learning curves that suggest significant contribution to higher employee loyalty, staff retention, lower scale and productivity.

B.Tech IT was WBL pedagogy for college or school leavers who are on the job with working experience enlisted in Information and Communication Technology.

Admission can be applied through the normal entry path or open entry path. For the normal entry path, candidates should have an A-Level, STPM or diploma or equivalent.

Through the open entry path, AU provides a flexible admission system for part-time study mode only. B.Tech IT is based on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) concept, where industry experience and professional certificates are given credit value and carry weighting in their qualifications.

The entry requirement for B.Tech programme for candidates must be at least 23 years old and possess a minimum PMR, SPM, UPSR or equivalent, with recognition working experience.

AU is a collaborative multinational university established under the auspices of the 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. AU also offers financial incentives and assistance in getting financial aids such as PTPTN loans and scholarships from EPU.

For details, call 3-9900-900-218, or apply online at www.au.edu.my

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