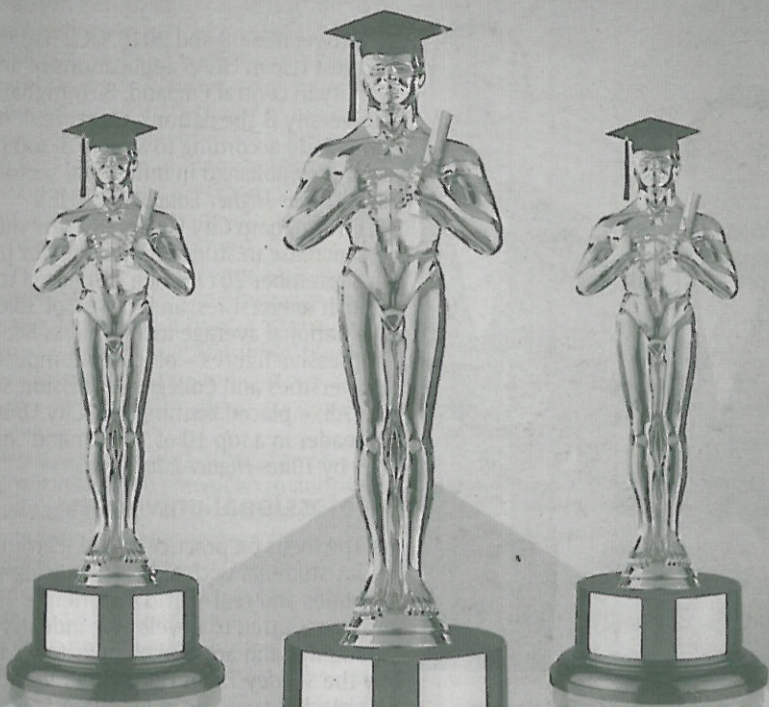


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Asia e University (AeU) School of Information & Communication Technology dean Prof Dr Syed Malek Fakar Duani: 'A gap exists between graduates' skills and the needs of the industry.'

Job placements for graduates

TOO often, employers find today's graduates lacking in practical knowledge, understanding of the real business world and communication skills. So, the graduates need to undergo retraining to make them employable.

Gone are the good old days when government and large corporations were the main employers of fresh graduates and could allow them time to learn the ropes and get up to speed.

Most employers today are small to medium enterprises which cannot afford such luxury, so the graduates employed must be able to hit the ground running from day one.

"A gap exists between graduates' skills and the needs of industry," said Asia e University (AeU) dean of School of Information & Communication Technology Prof Dr Syed Malek Fakar Duani.

"These gaps exist in their work culture, level of maturity, social skills, understanding of the business environment and their ability to adapt quickly to their employer's demands," he added.

University students are limited when it comes to gathering real world experience because they are confined to their own peer circle and busy with university activities. In some cases, activities and internships are too short to assist in building a matured character.

Hence, when they start working, they face challenges with interacting with senior colleagues, dealing with business people and professionals with confidence, or work with colleagues with tolerance and compromise.

Work-based learning

AeU addresses the perennial issue of "industrial mismatch" through the Work-based Learning (WBL) concept which is incorporated in its teaching pedagogy. For example, SICT offers the Professional Bachelor of Computer Technology (PBCT), a three-year programme for school leavers and provide industrial placement at the early stage of their study. Students can earn the degree while working to make ends meet.

The WBL concept has been practised overseas for decades by some prominent institution such as the University of Victoria in Australia and Middlesex University in the Britain. Some US states such as Georgia

adopted WBL as its state education policy in secondary schools.

WBL starts the industrial placement period from as early as the beginning of the first semester. This way students will graduate with at least three long years of working experience. Subsequently, it can be presumed that they are already on the job before they complete their studies.

The PBCT programme spans nine semesters of three months each, or 27 months altogether. They will altogether take 21 subjects, including in applications programming, software integration and architecture, interface design, networking, enterprise programming, database design and programming, service oriented architecture and web services, web development and technology, business operations and service, intranet and Internet, software and network security, and they will also undertake a professional project each year.

They will also be evaluated through quizzes, by their lab work, assignments and a final exam. Thus, graduates will be more confident to demonstrate their skills and knowledge based upon their experience, rather than from textbook knowledge.

Entry requirements are flexible and allow entry with minimum SPM or diploma since it has multiple entry points. For example, a diploma holder could enter at the third year level to earn the bachelor degree within one year.

Post Graduate Diploma

The School of ICT, in partnership with the leading post-graduate school in India - Indian Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B), also offers the Postgraduate Diploma in Software Development programme. It prepares students to take the M Tech, a much sought-after qualification offered by IIIT-B. Entry requirements are a Bachelors degree in computer science, IT, electrical engineering or equivalent. The programme lasts one year (four quarters of 12 weeks each or a total of 48 weeks).

AeU is a Malaysian initiative to provide an international university education with students from across 31 countries of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

● For more information, visit www.aeu.edu.my