

Empowering adult learners

As economies the world over become more knowledge-based, working professionals find themselves faced with the reality of having to continuously upgrade themselves to keep up.

However, modern lifestyle commitments may mean people find it hard to make time to go back to university.

If you turn to Professor Datuk Dr Ansary Ahmed, he would, of course, advise you to play smart and opt for the open learning concept.

The Asia e University (AeU) president and chief executive officer puts it this way: "Do you want to go back to university or have the university come to you?"

Prof Ansary is well-positioned to make a statement like that with his university being an internationally recognised brand in the business that caters to adult learners.

AeU was selected by the Higher Education Ministry, under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), as "the gateway university" for international education for distance and online learning, a decision that, Prof Ansary says, reflects how AeU is considered "the most appropriately positioned Malaysian university".

Through "the AeU gateway", collaborating institutions have access to an Integrated E-learning platform. Partner institutions use the online gateway to deliver their programmes, provide expertise and can conduct assessment and quality assurance, while AeU through the gateway is in a position to provide the necessary administrative support, on behalf of the partner institution.

AeU is among only 70 universities in Asia that cater to the workforce using the open university concept.

"We made the conscious decision that we are the university that comes to you," Prof Ansary says.

AeU believes in removing barriers for an individual to choose what he or she wants to study.

"It gives you a second chance to do what

you like to do because as you mature and gain life and work experience, your interests change. And that is where we come in," says Prof Ansary.

Open learning does not put any prerequisite to enrolling in a programme. For example, you can decide to do an engineering programme without having a credit in mathematics as opposed to close learning where you must have a pass or a distinction for the university to consider your application.

Prof Ansary explains, "Open learning is a philosophy that says anybody at any age can enter a university. Nobody says you must have qualifications to study a particular course. Distance Learning is different. It is a methodology where there is a space between the student and the lecturer. People tend to think it is the same.

"E-learning, on the other hand, is different. It is a form of learning where digital resources are used to learn."



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AeU practises the fifth generation of distance learning which uses the Internet and smart mobile devices like tablet computers (such as iPad). The first generation used postal to correspond, followed by the use of radio and television, a concept initiated by the first open university founded in the United Kingdom.

"The sixth generation, Web 2.0, is coming and it will promote collaborative learning using social networking," says Prof Ansary.

AeU offers programmes in business, management, education & cognitive science, information & communication technology, arts, humanities & social sciences as well as professional and executive education.

The programmes are not structured but are instead "like a buffet where you get to pick out the subjects you want to do".

"The students are empowered to make their own choices," he adds.

One distinguishing feature of AeU is the way the programmes are delivered. Crafted to suit the demanding schedules of working

professionals and adult learners, independent learning is the focal component of our courses.

The students also benefit from the valuable real world experiences of their peers through numerous interactive opportunities.

AeU adopts a flexible and practice-focused teaching and learning approach and offers programmes that are rigorous, multi-mode and relevant – factors that are highly valued by busy executives who demand learning that can be tailored to suit their busy schedules, and knowledge and skills that are immediately applicable to their jobs.

AeU offers quality education and recognised academic programmes, allowing you to choose the perfect learning solution. It offers undergraduate, postgraduate diploma, Master's and Doctorate programmes, executive education and professional courses.

All programmes are taught by highly qualified lecturers and academic facilitators.

In addition to normal entry, relevant work experience is considered as part of AeU's Open Entry admission.

Open Entry refers to non-restrictive entry requirements that are applicable for students with working experience that can be assessed and matched with learning outcomes.

It allows prospective students a second chance at higher education as prior learning experience is acknowledged as valuable learning and used to compensate for paper qualifications.

Prof Ansary says, "This is part of AeU's continuing effort to serve our community. The university is determined to reach out to an ever wider diversity of adult learners in Malaysia, by working with government and private organisations to promote the cause of lifelong learning and upgrading."

"Since our inception six years ago, AeU has steadfastly held on to this mission by investing resources and creating multiple pathways to make it possible for those who formerly have no avenue to earn a degree to enter university."

Enrolment for the May semester is now open. Candidates can apply for studies through regular entry or via Open Entry System that takes into consideration the individual's work experience.

For open entry into the degree programmes, those aged 21 and above with minimum PMR/SPM/MCE/UEC/Diploma or equivalent qualifications and with related work experience are eligible to apply.

Meanwhile, for the postgraduate programmes, those who are 35 and above with STPM/Diploma/Foundation/Matriculation or equivalent and two years working experience at supervisory level may apply to AeU.

You are invited to visit the AeU Preview Day at the Main Campus on Sept 7 from 9am to noon.

■ For details, log on to aeu.edu.my or call the toll-free careline at 1300 300 238.