

**INTERNATIONALISATION OF POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION
THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**

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Today, we are living in a very complex, challenging and borderless world. Globalisation and liberalisation affect socio-culture life of the world's population including Malaysia. In an era where knowledge, creativity and skills are considered valuable, highly sought and a source of wealth, education has become more and more relevant and significant. With priority given to education, governments of the world have begun to make greater investment in education, including postgraduate studies. We are indeed entering an era where undergraduate and postgraduate education has become priorities in nation building. The winds of change in world educational trends at the higher learning levels can clearly be felt and universities must move forward and be more dynamic if they are to be acknowledged as institutions of international standing and calibre. For example, through internationalisation of education, more exchange programmes and collaborations among universities, in both academic and research, should be the main focus of universities across the world.

The mission statement from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia is to develop a world-class quality education system which will realise the full potential of individual and fulfill the aspiration of the Malaysian nation. The government of Malaysia is committed to the objective of creating Malaysia as a centre for educational excellence in the region. Towards meeting this objective, local universities have been encouraged to make radical changes in the way they manage and mobilize their human resources and academic programmes towards attracting more international students. The international positioning and recognition that such higher educational institutions obtained should be ultimate in their quest for their institutional quality and excellence. To ensure the maintenance of such high standards of excellence, an appropriate mechanism must be established to facilitate the entry and quality for international students to Malaysian universities. This is to ensure that their stay in this country is both enriching and academically rewarding. It is noteworthy that this policy has shown some encouraging results.

As the premier university of Malaysia, the image of the University of Malaya is one of excellence, prestige, and quality education and research. The mission of the University of Malaya is seeking excellence in the advancement of and dissemination of knowledge to meet the aspiration of the nation. At the University of Malaya, we have primed our education structures to enable building of a pool of well educated, highly skilled and strongly motivated professionals. The nation's human capital is its most important economic and development resources. The ultimate goal is to deliver on the promises made to establish Malaysia as a fully developed and industrialised country in the 21st century.

The objectives of the University of Malaya include: to be in the forefront of knowledge, to produce graduates of high quality, to develop a permanent pool of excellent scholars, to contribute to nation-building and the well-being of the people, to promote universal human values and to develop an efficient, innovative and committed management.

The University of Malaya has taken drastic steps to implement the Government's policy on internationalisation of education. After years of producing quality undergraduates, the focus of the University of Malaya is shifting to postgraduate studies. The postgraduate population, including local and international students, is steadily increasing so that the University of Malaya will become the nucleus for postgraduate education in the region. Through internationalisation, many programmes have been initiated with universities worldwide. As we are moving towards research-based university, the University of Malaya strives to be at forefront of educational excellence through restructuring its postgraduate education and research.

Postgraduate study at the University of Malaya has always been the popular choice among students, both locally and internationally. There are several factors why the University of Malaya has been the choice of students. Being the premier university in Malaysia, the University of Malaya has many reputable academies, centres, faculties and institutes ranging from the arts to the sciences. The University of Malaya offers a wide spectrum of courses in English with high-calibre academic staff and expertise in the country who are in the forefront of research, innovation and discovery as well as receiving numerous awards for various achievements.

The University of Malaya always strives to keep and maintain high-class infrastructure and facilities for academic, research and administration, especially laboratory, information technology, library services, accommodation and transportation. Indeed the University of Malaya is providing a safe and conducive environment for learning and research culture in the university. One of the pre-requisites to be world-renowned university is to be excellent in research, particularly postgraduate research. This is in line with the University of Malaya's status as a research university.

The Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS) is the postgraduate centre of the University of Malaya. IPS aims to achieve excellence in postgraduate education and training in order to meet the growing demands of a knowledge-based society. From its inception in 1979, IPS was formerly known as the Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research (IPSP). In 2002, IPS was restructured as a one-stop postgraduate centre whereby IPS plans to streamline and integrate all activities related to postgraduate programmes.

IPS is developing into a one-stop postgraduate centre responsible for admission, registration, finance, accommodation and visa arrangements as well as administration of examinations for students pursuing the postgraduate programmes at the University of Malaya for Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. As a one-stop centre for all postgraduate programmes, IPS is working closely with the faculties to enhance both the academic and student services for postgraduate students.

The vision of IPS is to be a world-class postgraduate centre and there are three goals which reflect its commitment to becoming one-stop centre:

- To increase the number of postgraduate students in the University of Malaya to 40% of the overall student population by 2005.
- To increase the number of international students pursuing postgraduate studies in University of Malaya to 30% of the postgraduate population by 2006.
- To become an effective and efficient one-stop postgraduate centre.

Each goal adheres to IPS objectives which are:

- To be the one-stop centre for the supervision, coordination and planning of postgraduate activities within the university so as to provide quality postgraduate programmes.
- To explore and establish training postgraduate programmes with other institutions of higher learning within and outside Malaysia.
- To provide amenities and services such as an information and resource centre, postgraduate lounge and international postgraduate affairs for visa and immigration matters.
- To organize academic and social activities such as graduate lecture series, dean's list functions, postgraduate association and annual postgraduate dinner functions.
- To increase the population of postgraduate students at the University of Malaya.
- To increase the number of international students pursuing postgraduate studies at the University of Malaya.

The various postgraduate programmes, (72 Masters and 23 PhD, totaling 95 programmes), that are offered by the University of Malaya in the various faculties are:

1. Masters by coursework
2. Masters by coursework and dissertation/research report
3. Masters by research (dissertation)
4. PhD by thesis and submission of thesis based on research project.

IPS has always strived to upgrade and to enhance its services and facilities in accordance with the varying needs of its students. Currently, there are 5 units in the organisation structure of IPS. These include General Administrative Unit, Postgraduate Admissions Unit, Examination Unit and Information Technology Unit. In the near future, IPS will establish two new units, that is, Students Affairs Unit and Postgraduate Counseling Unit. The Postgraduate Counseling Unit will coordinate the postgraduate club, organize counseling services for postgraduate students and handle all postgraduate inquiries, complaints and other academic and social issues. The Student Affairs Unit shall handle all other postgraduate-related concerns. With the development of the official IPS website and IPS on-line SIS system, registration, admission, course selection and fee payment can also be performed on the Internet at the student's convenience.

IPS aims to be the leading postgraduate school in Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific region. IPS also hopes to attract high-calibre postgraduate students as a result of the constant upgrading and improvement of facilities, infrastructure and the excellent academic teaching and support staff available throughout the University of Malaya. As a student-friendly institution, IPS aims to provide superior support services to develop favourable environment to foster and nurture excellence in both local and international postgraduate students.

IPS will work along strategically with the Institute of Research Management and Consultation (IPPP) and various faculties to enhance its position as a leading postgraduate school in the region. Thus, IPPP will work effectively with the various authorities to reposition the laboratories at IPS complex in order for the University of Malaya to achieve its vision to be a research University as well as fulfilling the IPS mission to become the postgraduate school in Malaysia and Asia Pacific region. IPPP will be responsible for overall research coordination, management and funding while IPS owns the research premises and is responsible and authorized to endorse infrastructure and property maintenance e.g. renovation of labs, buildings to accommodate research. The implementation of these recommendations requires further discussion in order to refine the details which are not wholly available at this moment in time. Under the management of IPPP, the IPS research complex is well-suited to adopt the concept of housing University-focused research projects due to the centralization of major equipment, the current available infrastructure and space necessary to accommodate large research laboratories as well as the ability to develop close links and interactions between postgraduate students, senior researchers and eminent scientists locally and abroad, housed within the IPS research premises and the whole of the University of Malaya.

Today, IPS by any academic and management standards is placed as the leading postgraduate School in Malaysia not only in terms of the size of its student population, but also the variety of background of these students. For 2003/2004 sessions, the total enrollment and admissions of students were 9087 and 2073 students, respectively, including 1267 (14.04%) and 265 (12.79%) international students. These international students were from 78 different countries such as the Middle-East, Indonesia, Sudan and Korea. As for Masters and PhD programmes, the total enrollment and admissions were

8257 versus 1863 students and 830 versus 211 students, respectively. The total number of students graduated for 2003/2004 session were 1067 and 74 students for Masters and PhD programmes, respectively.

In an effort to make the University of Malaya well known internationally, various collaborations in academic and research activities with outstanding overseas universities, industries, and research institutions are established. Currently, more than 50 collaborations across the globe are made which include South East Asia, Australia, Africa, South America and North America. The following internationalisation programmes have been implemented at the University of Malaya:

1. Collaboration with world-class universities in research and academic activities. Currently, we have Memorandum of Understandings with 64 foreign universities from 26 countries, focusing on research collaboration and exchange of staff and students. Our partners are prestigious universities such as Seoul National University, University of Tokyo, the University of Melbourne, the University of Auckland, the Chulalongkorn University and the University of British Columbia.
2. Academic programs which are of international standards such as the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (recognized by the General Dental Council of United Kingdom) and Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical) recognized by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (UK) and the Bachelor of Quantity Surveying and Association of Building Engineers (UK & Europe) for the Building Surveying undergraduate program.
3. The establishment of the Asia-Europe Institute, a postgraduate research and teaching to enhance Asia-Europe relations by facilitating understanding of cultures, histories, politics, institutions, economics, business and legal practices. Currently it offers 3 international masters programs in International Management, Regional Integration and Small-Medium Enterprise with English, Spanish and Italian universities as its academic partners.
4. Availability of international fellowships, scholarships and bursaries for students and staff to participate in academic activities abroad.
5. Employing international staff to enhance the quality of teaching.
6. Accepting visiting scholars and professors to conduct research with their partners in the University of Malaya.
7. Memberships in prestigious university associations such as Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), ASEAN University network (AUN) (UM is a Board of Trustee) and Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). Through these associations we are able to recommend educational policies to be forwarded to relevant government bodies.
8. Special Programmes : e.g. ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) ASEAN Studies Programme, Academy of Malay Studies Programme for Singaporeans, short-term study visits.
9. Conducting international workshops, seminars and talks on campus.

The University of Malaya is very successful in promoting postgraduate studies in Malaysia. However, there are still issues and challenges to be addressed by the University of Malaya, particularly IPS. These include marketing tools (prospectus, brochure, exhibition and website development), human resources (recruit more staff and continuous training) and facilities (up-to-date equipment and facilities, stable computer network and system, own server in IPS and online registration, admission, examination and payment of fees system) and student welfare (new student affair unit, accommodation for postgraduate students, student friendly environment, IPS gallery, promotion of research culture and environment, fellow room, scholarship/ loan for postgraduate students, visa application and issues, postgraduate club and international students club).

In conclusions, IPS at the University of Malaya aims to be the leading postgraduate school in Malaysia and Asia-Pacific region. We envisage to attract high-calibre postgraduate students as a result of our continuous upgrading and improvement of facilities and excellent academic and support staff. With the development of the website and our online Student Information System (SIS system), registration, admission, course selection and fee payment can be performed on the internet at the student's convenience. IPS is a student-friendly institution which aims to provide superior support services to develop a conducive research environment to foster and nurture both local and international postgraduate students. The University of Malaya offers plethora of courses to be chosen from numerous faculties ranging from arts and sciences. Currently, aggressive promotional efforts have been made to attract international students to continue their postgraduate studies in line with the University's internationalisation programmes. As a one-stop centre, it is our aim to streamline and integrate all activities related to postgraduate programmes in IPS, i.e., payment of fees, course registration, admissions and examination matters. By building a world-class system at the University of Malaya that is flexible and innovative, we hope to create here in Malaysia a regional education hub and a centre for educational excellence.