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25
YEARS IN
MALAYSIA

ENCORE: THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER



We Still Believe

Summer is supposedly for "rest", yet here at FASS, we keep moving with purpose and passion. We celebrate our colleagues' birthdays with genuine warmth and watch the NUBS Malaysia Class of 2026 step into their futures with pride. SPIRE gathers young leaders from across Asia, forging connections that transcend borders, while welcoming students from Kenya into our global family. Our student-led AI manifesto reaches policymakers and government leaders, proving that classroom ideas carry real weight in shaping national conversations. And as Malaysia's new Learning Matrix takes shape, our academics ensure every child's growth remains at the heart of educational change.

We cannot ignore the urgent fight for survival, the challenges that press upon our communities, our classrooms, and our shared humanity in so many polarizing ways. Yet the true story unfolding here is one of flourishing and thriving. In every workshop, every graduation ceremony, every policy dialogue, we witness resilience turning into the practice of new alternatives.

Our inspiration draws from depth, not austerity. We cultivate bonds that enrich, connections that heal and learning that transforms. In other words, and quite surprisingly considering all we're going through, we still believe profoundly in the inherent purpose of our work.

We also welcome the second issue of the new edition of The Common Room, giving our postgraduates a space to reflect on navigating academic life through music. The bonus link this time is on the final page where you click on "External Engagement".

Happy reading, people.

Dr Fuad Rahmat

Associate Dean
Admissions, Recruitment &
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University of Nottingham Malaysia

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FASS Spotlight | Celebrating FASS staff birthdays

April and August Birthday Wishes

This month, we are delighted to celebrate our colleagues with birthdays in April and August, including a special belated birthday wish to a colleague whose celebration was missed in our earlier issue.

Happy Birthday to

April

Nadiah Mohamad, Programme Officer, Faculty Office

August

Kwan Hwee Ling, Assistant Professor in Mandarin, School of Education

Chua Mung Seng (Paul), Assistant Manager - Programme and Student Support, Faculty Office

Yeong Woon Chin, Assistant Manager - Admissions, Recruitment & Marketing and External Engagement, Faculty Office

Dr Karma Tashi Choedron (Savinder Kaur Gill), Assistant Professor, School of Politics, International Relations and Economics

Dr Suruchi Mazumdar, Associate Professor, School of Humanities

You remain highly cited in the acknowledgements section of our hearts. As we welcome a new semester, may the year ahead be free of revisions, your impact factor soar, and your deadlines always self-extend.

Let's take a moment to share our warmest wishes and make their birthdays extra special. Their contact details are available on the **University's Staff Directory**.

Best wishes from your FASS colleagues.



Student Achievement | Teaching & Learning



Celebrating the NUBS Malaysia Class of 2026

On 25 July 2026, **Nottingham University Business School Malaysia** celebrated the achievements of the Class of 2026, marking the culmination of years of learning, perseverance, and personal growth.

Graduation represents more than the completion of a degree. It celebrates the resilience, ambition, and determination that have shaped each graduate's journey while preparing them to make meaningful contributions to their professions and communities.

As graduates embark on the next chapter of their lives, they join a global network of Nottingham alumni committed to responsible leadership and lifelong learning.

The **Faculty** congratulates the Class of 2026 and wishes them every success as they begin new careers, pursue further study and continue making a positive impact wherever they go.





SPIRE Summer School Brings Together Future Leaders from Across Asia

The **School of Politics, International Relations & Economics (SPIRE)** welcomed participants of the University of Nottingham Malaysia Undergraduate Summer School Programme 2026 to a one-day workshop themed "Empowering Youth Voice in Asia". As part of the two-week Summer School Programme, the workshop brought together more than 35 students from around the world to explore regional issues, strengthen leadership skills, and collaborate across cultures.

The morning session, led by **Dr Benjamin Barton, Head of SPIRE**, featured a Mini Regional Game where students assumed the roles of regional stakeholders to debate whether the United Nations Security Council should have the authority to address climate change. Through diplomacy, negotiation, and critical discussion, participants worked towards building an ASEAN consensus while developing practical policy recommendations.

In the afternoon, **Dr Lau Siew Yee, Assistant Professor** at SPIRE, introduced students to Data for Advocacy, demonstrating how data can be transformed into compelling advocacy tools. Working against the clock, teams analysed youth-related issues, designed advocacy posters aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and delivered three-minute presentations that showcased evidence-based thinking, creativity, and teamwork.

The presentations were evaluated by an academic panel comprising **Dr Luke Emeka Okafor, Dr Saizi Xiao, and Dr Rasyad Parinduri**, with Group 7 receiving the Best Poster Presentation Award for its project "Empowering Youth Voice in Asia: Gender Inequality in Afghanistan." The workshop was further supported by **Dr Mahmood-ur Rahman** and **Ms Ng Pek Kim**, whose contributions helped ensure the programme's success.

The workshop reflects **SPIRE's** commitment to creating experiential learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom, equipping students with the confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative skills needed to address contemporary regional and global challenges.

Visit the **School of Politics, International Relations & Economics (SPIRE)** [LinkedIn page](#) for the latest updates on student learning, research, and international engagement.

External Engagement | Student Recruitment



SPIRE Welcomes Kitengela International Schools

The **School of Politics, International Relations & Economics (SPIRE)** welcomed students and teachers from Kitengela International Schools, Kenya, to the **University of Nottingham Malaysia** as part of the School's ongoing commitment to international engagement and student outreach.

During the visit, participants were introduced to **SPIRE's** interdisciplinary programmes and gained insights into studying politics, international relations, and economics within a global learning environment. The visit also provided opportunities to engage with academic staff, learn about student life at the University, and explore how the School prepares graduates to address contemporary regional and global challenges.

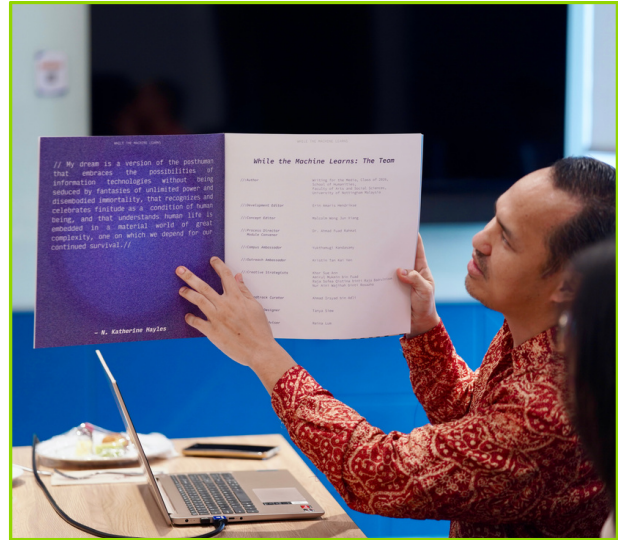
Through conversations with academics and the wider University community, students gained a deeper understanding of higher education opportunities at the **University of Nottingham Malaysia** and the value of an international education in developing critical thinking, leadership, and intercultural awareness.

The visit reflects **SPIRE's** commitment to building relationships with schools and creating opportunities for prospective students to experience university learning first-hand. Such engagements strengthen international connections while inspiring the next generation of learners to pursue higher education with confidence and curiosity.

Meaningful engagement with prospective students helps foster international partnerships and provides valuable insights into the opportunities offered by a global university education. Our thanks to the **Student Recruitment** team for their collaboration on this outreach activity.

Visit the **School of Politics, International Relations & Economics (SPIRE) [LinkedIn page](#)** to discover more outreach activities, student engagement initiatives, and international partnerships.

Teaching & Learning | External Engagement



From Classroom to Policymakers: Student AI Manifesto Extends Its Reach

The student-led ***While the Machine Learns: A Manifesto for AI and Education*** continues to extend its reach beyond the classroom, with students from the **School of Humanities** engaging policymakers and economists while attracting national media attention for their contribution to conversations about artificial intelligence and education.

On **26 July 2026**, *The Star* featured the manifesto in an article titled "Class of AI-dea makers" profiling the final-year **International Communications Studies** students behind the project. The feature explored the manifesto's 15 principles and its call for a critical, human-centred approach to AI education. It also highlighted the students' approach to using generative AI as a strategic analytical tool while retaining human judgement throughout the learning process.

The manifesto has also opened opportunities for students to take their ideas directly into policy conversations. The team met **Dr Matthew Dornan, Senior Economist at the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice**, to discuss workforce readiness, skills and the implications of AI for Malaysia's labour market. The conversation provided an opportunity to consider how the manifesto's emphasis on discernment and human judgement connects with wider discussions about preparing people for workplaces increasingly shaped by automation.

Students subsequently met **YB Liew Chin Tong, Deputy Minister of Finance**, where discussions centred on critical AI literacy and the importance of including student perspectives in national conversations about AI governance, technology and economic competitiveness.

What began as a final-year learning project is therefore developing into something larger: an opportunity for students to bring research, critical inquiry and their lived experiences of AI into conversations extending beyond the University.

Student learning can extend beyond assessment and the classroom, creating opportunities for young people to contribute evidence-based perspectives to public and policy conversations about issues that will shape their future.

Explore ***While the Machine Learns*** and follow the **Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences** on **Instagram** for the latest developments from the student-led AI manifesto.

Malaysia's New Learning Matrix: Supporting Learning, Not Another Exam

Dr Tiong Ngee Derk from the **School of Education** recently contributed to public discussion on Malaysia's evolving education landscape through an article published in Malaysiakini, examining whether the country's new Learning Matrix can meaningfully support student learning or risk becoming another examination.

In the article, **Dr Tiong** highlights the potential of the Learning Matrix as a low-stakes, standardised tool for monitoring student progress, complementing school-based assessments and identifying learning gaps at an earlier stage.

He also considers how implementation will ultimately determine its effectiveness. This includes avoiding excessive test drilling, prioritising mastery-based reporting over grades, and ensuring that assessment results are used to strengthen learning rather than create additional pressure for students and schools.

The article contributes an educational perspective to wider public conversations about assessment and education policy in Malaysia, highlighting the important role educators can play in considering not only how new initiatives are designed, but how they translate into meaningful learning in practice.

The value of assessment lies not simply in measuring learning, but in how the information it provides is used to identify gaps, support students, and improve learning.

Read **Dr Tiong's** full article in [Malaysiakini](#) for his perspective on Malaysia's new Learning Matrix.



Thank you for reading!

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