

Quality assurance seminar brings Asean together

DELEGATES from universities in the Asean region recently came together to identify how higher education institutions (HEIs) have been evolving with the times.

Jointly organised by Sunway University, Sunway College and Malaysian Higher Education Institutions Quality Assurance Network (MyQAN), the Seminar on Internal-External Quality Assurance (SieQA) 2021 was held virtually from March 16 to 17.

Themed “Higher Education as Enterprise – Embedding the Quality Assurance Culture”, over 400 participants from Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia, among others, explored practical strategies for creating a culture which maximises flexibility, encourages enterprise, and raises current and future standards.

Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Mansor Othman, who officiated the seminar, emphasised that good quality assurance practices ensure that future talents can survive and thrive in a post-Covid-19 world and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“The Malaysian government is always supportive of internationalisation initiatives such as the SieQA as part of our push to become an international education hub.

“The SieQA 2021 is timely for the exploration of the future of quality assurance in Asean’s education institutions,” he said.

MyQAN president Prof Dr Roziah Mohd Janor said there are several types of universities and institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, and it is a challenging task to assure the quality of the programmes.

“There is a need to form a network of quality assurance officers and provide a platform to share, learn and express the concerns surrounding issues related to programme accreditations in a friendly manner,” she said.

According to Sunway University vice-chancellor Prof Graeme Wilkinson (*pic*), HEIs are going through a period of radical change globally and the Covid-19 pandemic has speeded up the evolution.

“Learning will increasingly use combined on-campus resources and the myriad of online materials including digital libraries, virtual reality simulations, and TED talks and YouTube lectures by famous educators and scientists,” he said.

He added that academics such as lecturers and professors will no longer conduct all of the teaching

themselves but instead, act as expert “curators” who will select from the huge range of resources from which students can learn.

Prof Wilkinson also emphasised that the big challenge for universities will be to ensure the high quality of the learning process.

“At Sunway University, we are actively promoting the idea of third generation quality assurance for higher education that embraces the changes that are now taking place,” he said.

Malaysian Qualifications Agency Board chairperson Prof Datuk Dr Asma Ismail said there is a need to improve information and communication technology, pedagogy and quality assurance competency to catch up with the ongoing advancement of technology.

“I would highly suggest that



teaching and learning support centres be set up in most universities to facilitate the continuing and professional development of faculty,” she said.

The conference also highlighted the need for more research in quality assurance areas in terms of relevance and effectiveness of new approaches.

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