

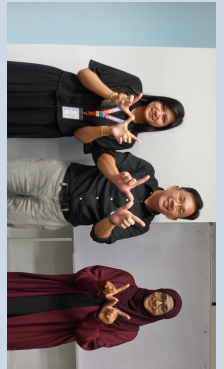
**PSYCHWATT**

**BE  
FUTURE  
MADE**

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**HERIOT  
WATT**  
UNIVERSITY  
UK | DUBAI | MALAYSIA



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# EDITORIAL



## **Professor Glenn Hitchman**

Head of Psychology Department

Welcome to the Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Psychology (HWUM) newsletter. Upon beginning my post as Head of Psychology a little over 9 months ago, I set the aspirations of building a stronger community among staff and students across all levels of study, making our daily interactions more fun, engaging and meaningful, and working with our partners to have a greater impact on the wider society. I am proud of the ways in which the articles featured in our first newsletter reflect so much progress towards these aspirations in such a short period of time.

The edition's feature article is written by our PhD student, Sharmila Fathima, who reflects on her doctoral research journey to date and the opportunities it has brought for her in her quest to enhance the critical thinking skills of young learners. It has been fantastic to see how she has engaged in academic conferences from the outset of her studies and the insights she has gained from being a member of a thriving academic community.

In keeping with HWU's core value of celebrating success, we are delighted to feature the achievements of our diverse staff and student body, which range from academic publications and media appearances to qualifications in learning and teaching and awards for outstanding student support. We also take this opportunity to congratulate our recent graduates and feature a gratitude letter from one of our new alumni.

For a relatively small team, we have also been very active on the research and community engagement fronts. You can enjoy reading about the academic outputs of both students and staff in addition to learning about the Improving University Teaching conference which we recently hosted at our campus in Putrajaya. We are particularly proud of Dr Ke Guek Nee who presented as a keynote speaker at the 4th World Congress on Mental Health in London. Furthermore, this edition also highlights our collaborative work with non-profit organisations and reports on the ongoing community work with our partners Diveheart and YTAR.

Our student stories focus on their experience of studying at HWUM, their recent internships, and some of the challenges they have overcome during their time with us. This serves to remind us that, more than ever, there are a multitude of factors beyond academic potential that contribute to students' success. On this note, I'd like to extend a special thank you to the Psychology Society for their efforts in facilitating a range of events that have brought us all together in fun and supportive environments.

If you're a prospective student, we hope to see you at an education fair or open day later this year – you'll find a schedule on page 22. If you're a new or returning student, we'll see you in class, online or in the lab, and if you're alumni, do keep in touch and come back to see us at our frequent social events.



# BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (BPS)

22 February 2023



the british  
psychological society  
accredited undergraduate psychology

## BPS VISIT

On 22nd February 2023, we felt well prepared and confident to satisfy the BPS that provisions at our campus are worthy of the accreditation. We provided a short presentation to highlight the Malaysian context before the student group did indeed impress the panel members, and we managed to provide good answers during the academic and management sessions. During the feedback session at the end of the day we received the rare feat of two commendations which clearly shows the visit's success!

## BPS JOURNEY

The British Psychological Society (BPS) accreditation journey started before the pandemic but made significant progress when our former Head of Department, Professor Deborah Hall, joined the Malaysia Psychology Department. Once the initial paperwork was accepted by the BPS, the preparations for the campus visit commenced in August 2022. Despite workload challenges, the entire team collaborated and made significant contributions to be able to provide excellent answers the BPS panel's questions. Additionally, we assembled a highly motivated student group who were keen on making a good impression on the panel.



**DR RON SALDEN**

OUR UNDERGRADUATE  
PROGRAMMES ARE NOW  
OFFICIALLY ACCREDITED  
BY THE BPS THANKS TO  
THE HARD WORK OF OUR  
STAFF AND  
STUDENTS!





# STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



**Dr Kenneth Leow**  
*Assistant Professor*

**FUN FACT:**  
I cycle 20km  
weekly!

I joined Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM) in January 2023. Since joining the psychology department, I have submitted 7 academic papers to peer-reviewed journals, of which 4 papers to date have been successfully accepted for publication. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate with fellow HWUM colleagues and undergraduate students in some of my research projects. Publications aside, I have also engaged with China Press for an interview on the topic of suicide and mental health in Malaysia. Furthermore, I have contributed 2 public engagement articles related to higher education in Malaysia for the New Straits Times. In April, I was invited by the Future Cities Research Institute to present my research on rejuvenating spaces and eudaimonic well-being. More recently, I have successfully presented a research paper on technostress in higher education at the Improving University Training conference which was held at HWUM in July.

**Dr Joel Yap**  
*Assistant Professor*

I contributed as a team member to secure undergraduate programme accreditation from the British Psychological Society (BPS). On 20th March 2023, I was one of the three distinguished speakers at the Happiness Forum, which took place alongside the International Day of Happiness with the theme "Happiness in Education: The Role of Educators in Student Holistic Education. Over 250 educators from Chong Hwa Independent High School and other Chinese Independent High Schools in the Klang Valley participated in the forum. This summer, I also participated in a roundtable discussion and presented a poster at the Improving University Teaching (IUT) Conference. I was also invited to speak about my ideas of using humour as a pedagogical tool at the EduTech Asia Show & Tell event in Singapore in November 2023.



**FUN FACT:**  
I am Cantonese  
but don't know  
how to speak  
Cantonese.

**Dr Poh Wei Lin**  
*Assistant Professor*

I was awarded a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) by Advance Higher Education in 2022. Fellowship demonstrates a personal and institutional commitment to professionalism in learning and teaching in higher education. While completing the FHEA programme, I was involved in a number of projects supporting learning and teaching that were funded by the UK Quality Assurance Agency's Enhancement-Themes programme and presented my work at the Improving University Teaching (IUT) Conference in 2022.

**FUN FACT:**  
I like to collect  
cute mugs.



# STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

## Dr Ron Salden

*Undergraduate Programme Director, Assistant Professor*

Once upon a time when I was a postdoctoral researcher, I won the Cognition and Student Learning Prize at the 2008 Cognitive Science conference. During the summer of 2019, I chaperoned several UG students who presented their Final Year Project (FYP) at a Psychology conference in Penang. Throughout my time at HWUM I have frequently offered extracurricular workshops to engage students in relevant research skills that benefit their FYP and employability. Also, I have contributed significantly to the preparation and visit of our successful BPS accreditation in February 2023. Furthermore, my impact statement has been put into practice with field trips to Diveheart Malaysia (see page 19). Additionally, on 1 March 2023 we hosted the impactful Memorandum of Understanding signing to strengthen our collaboration with Diveheart. I aim to have staff and students become volunteers to join me in making positive contributions for the disabled community in Malaysia.

**FUN FACT:**  
During the pandemic, I grew a lockdown beard. It was pretty epic! 😄



## Dr Ke Guek Nee

*Associate Professor*

Dr Ke obtained the first and second external grants for HWUM in 2015-2016, amounting to RM400,000. Over her 10 years of service, she has secured 9 research grants from internal, national and international funders. Five of these projects were as Principal Investigators (PI), with close to a one-million-ringgit contribution to the university. Among the project, she secured two grants from the 'Global Challenges Research Fund-The Scottish Council' as PI in collaboration with NGOs and international research centres. The first study aimed to investigate the socio-economic and psychological well-being of coastal communities, while the second project aimed to study the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the socio-economic, psychological well-being and resilience in the Malaysian population. As a result, in 2022, a total of 4 articles were published in Tier 1 journals, indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. In her efforts to promote 'Cyber wellness', Dr Ke focuses on 'Preventive Psychological Programmes' for young people to mitigate internet addiction. She is thankful to the funding support from the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). In 2022, she published a book entitled 'Cyber Wellness: Internet addiction and prevention. A guide for practitioners. This book reports the collective empirical outcomes and evidence of validation of these intervention programmes.

**FUN FACT:**  
I am a Black Belt in Taekwondo!

## Dr Mandy S.C. Wong

*Postgraduate Programme Director, Assistant Professor*

*"I am a river to nourish and nurture life. My purpose is to inspire and encourage others to lead a meaningful life. I strive to influence others to achieve wellbeing and live a purposeful life through activities that lead them to acquire life experiences."*

I am coordinating and delivering undergraduate and postgraduate psychology courses with colleagues in the UK, Dubai and Malaysia. I am also the global course leader of one of the undergraduate Research Methods courses. In addition, I am Postgraduate Psychology Programme Director. In this role, I ensure students successfully complete their studies and oversee the smooth delivery of the courses. I was a committee member of the Responsive Blended Learning action group during the pandemic, working closely and actively with the marketing and academic quality teams in student admissions and student recruitment. Furthermore, I supported the achievement of the successful accreditation of our undergraduate programmes from both the Malaysian Qualification Agency and the British Psychological Society. I am also an external examiner for a private education institution.

**FUN FACT:**  
I enjoy pearl tea but I do not take it more than 3 times a year.



# STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



**Dr David Barron**

*Associate Professor*

**FUN FACT:**  
My first job was  
a Junior  
International  
Badminton  
player!

The end of 2022 marked the completion of a major collaborative research project I was involved in. While this can be very challenging there are a number of things that make this so worthwhile. First and foremost, working with an international team allows me to tap into a wealth of diverse perspectives and expertise, which enriches the quality and depth of our research. It's incredible to see how different cultures and academic backgrounds can contribute unique insights and methodologies, making our findings more robust and insightful. Beyond the academic benefits, these collaborations create a wonderful sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. Connecting with like-minded researchers who share a passion for advancing our understanding of psychology creates a lively and intellectually stimulating environment. I cherish the opportunity to engage in fruitful discussions, exchange ideas, and contribute to the collective knowledge of the human condition. One of the most rewarding aspects is the global impact our research can have. By collaborating with researchers from various countries, we can reach a broader audience and foster interdisciplinary dialogue. It's always amazing to think that our work has the potential to influence policies and practices in psychology on a worldwide scale. Indeed, publishing psychology research through large-scale collaborations is all about embracing diverse perspectives, building a supportive community, and making a positive impact globally.

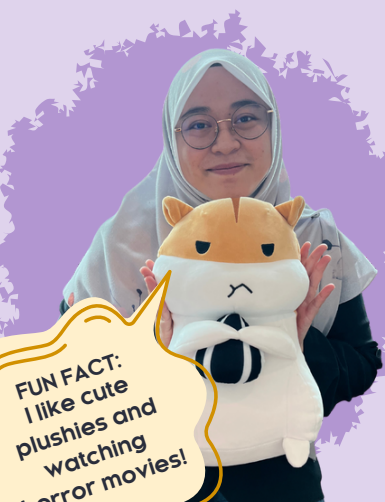
**Prof Glenn Hitchman**

*Professor and Head of Department*

It was a significant achievement to assume the role of Head of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia as a Professor. Since joining in March, my focus has been twofold: nurturing a sense of community among staff, students, and our external partners, and injecting more fun, enjoyment and engagement into our psychology provisions. To this end, I've enjoyed working closely with the Psychology Society committee to plan a vibrant calendar of activities and events for the 2023/24 academic year. These initiatives offer a plethora of opportunities for our community to come together, explore psychological concepts, acquire new skills, and embrace new experiences. Compared to my first day in this role, witnessing more smiles both inside and outside the classroom, and the growing sounds of laughter, have been just as gratifying as the academic milestones achieved by our dedicated staff and students.



**FUN FACT:**  
I spent a year  
working in England's  
national football  
stadium, where I met  
some of the world's  
most elite  
sportspeople.



**Ms Aisyah Zulkipli**

*Psychology Technician*

I received the Learning & Teaching Oscars Award 2023 for 'Most Supportive Member of Staff' and recently became a domain leader for one of the EmPOWER Programme domains 'Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Happiness'.

However, my greatest sense of achievement is when students tell me I have impacted their lives beyond their academic learning – it makes me happier than receiving any awards!

**FUN FACT:**  
I like cute  
plushies and  
watching  
horror movies!



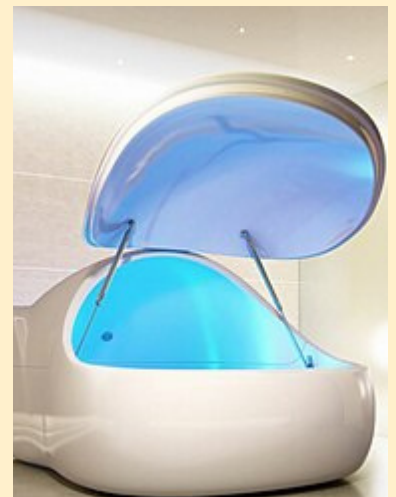
# HWUM RESEARCH



## Professor Glenn Hitchman

Professor and Head of  
Department

Professor Glenn Hitchman, in collaboration with colleagues in the UK and Australia, has had two papers accepted for presentation at the 65th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association in Oslo. The first paper describes a meta-analysis of studies that have assessed the role of individual difference factors such as personality, creativity and the practice of a mental discipline when using the ganzfeld stimulation method to facilitate anomalous information transfer.



The second paper includes the preliminary findings of a study designed to test Rupert Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance using recognition for real and imitative Chinese characters. These studies are closely aligned with Glenn's lifelong interests in people's beliefs in and reported experiences of paranormal phenomena as well as altered experiences of consciousness. His current research involves exploring the use of floatation tanks as a means to induce psi-conductive states of consciousness.

# HWUM RESEARCH



**Dr  
Ke  
Guek  
Nee**

Associate Professor

Heriot-Watt University (Malaysia) Psychology team member, Dr Ke Guek Nee recently presented as an invited keynote speaker at the highly anticipated "4th World Congress on Mental Health" that took place in London, UK from May 22nd-23rd, 2023. This premier international event brought together leading experts in the field of psychology, psychiatry and allied sciences to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and advance the understanding of mental health. The keynote addresses were entitled, 1) Positive Coping Mechanisms and Psychological Symptoms Towards Pregnant Women's Well-being, 2) Cyber Wellness in the 21st Century: Positive Psychology and CBT Interventions for Youths. The psychology team is proud to see the positive impact our member is having on the world and her continuous contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Good Health and Wellbeing.



# HWUM RESEARCH



**Dr  
Joel  
Yap**

Assistant Professor



The EDUtech Show & Tell 2023 serves as a platform for educators, including teachers, lecturers, ed-tech coaches, and administrators, to come together and showcase their effective teaching methods and innovative practices in education. Dr Joel Yap was a featured presenter at the EDUtech Show & Tell 2023, held on November 8, 2023, at Sands Expo in Singapore. Dr. Joel focused on "Creating a Positive and Enjoyable Teaching and Learning Environment Through Humour." In his presentation, he shared insights into incorporating humour to cultivate a dynamic classroom atmosphere, enhancing attendance by promoting a pleasant and relaxed learning environment and recognising the significant impact of humour on the overall learning experience.





## Dr Kenneth Leow

Assistant Professor

University students experience various factors that impact their well-being in higher education learning. Self-determination theory (SDT) shares the underlying philosophy of eudaimonia and well-being. My recent study examined the relationship between satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in predicting greater well-being among first-year university students in a private university in Selangor, Malaysia. The sample derived from 173 first-year university students studying in Selangor, Malaysia. Participants completed measures of the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale and Subjective Vitality Scale. The findings of this study indicated that autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly predicted students' well-being. Moreover, the roles of basic psychological needs appeared to be important factors in predicting well-being among university students. The results of this study further highlighted that when students feel autonomous, a sense of school connectedness, and a sense of scholastic competence, they are able to flourish under a positive learning environment and cultivate eudaimonic well-being.

# STUDENT STORIES

## Life-changing experiences I have learned and remembered as a HWUM psychology student



**Nurul Nasuha Irdina**  
BSc Psychology Year 2

I think that a lot of us who study Psychology came in with the intention of learning more about themselves or other people; mine was the latter. Since I was young, I've always been fascinated by people and, to quote my mom, Stella Marie, "what makes them tick". Why is it that a person behaves in a certain way or does what they do? Why do they hold very strong beliefs about some things but not others? Acts of altruism, psychopathy, religion and faith, to name a few, continue to intrigue me.

In our Social Psychology class, I learned about helping behaviours. I was given the opportunity to act as if I was ill, walking around campus to observe who would offer me help. I remember putting on makeup as I was determined to understand how the 'bystander effect' would manifest when others had the opportunity to help. Therefore, the experiment needed to be successful. What I enjoyed most was that we got to see how the theories play out in real life, which aided my learning process.

This experience was not just entertaining but it also piqued my interest to learn more about helping behaviours. As a HWUM Psychology student, learning about theories is always vital and valued, but here, we are given other ways to aid our learning while developing other skills. We are encouraged to independently search for answers in multiple ways. Psychology at HWUM is not just taught in theory but in practice too!

Coming into it, I had a narrow view on of what Psychology was. I had the layman's understanding of it from the media which was largely unrepresentative. However, studying Psychology opened me up to its true nature and wonderful world of complexities. It was definitely exciting to open my eyes again and for the first time to see this world and watch other like-minds do the same.



**Noor Stephanie Binti Johan**  
BSc Psychology Year 3



# STUDENT STORIES



**Adriena Sofia binti  
Rudy Adrie**  
BSc Psychology Year 3

For my 2nd year internship programme, I was accepted into a special education centre, focusing on those with symptoms of ADS and dyslexia. On my first day, I was tasked with sitting in a teaching session with 2 other Early Intervention Programme (EIP) Therapists. My client? A 5-year-old-male, non-verbal, assessed with low-functioning ADS. I was scared, I didn't know what to expect, let alone how to teach and educate these individuals. But something soon clicked; he could understand behaviour and he could predict and anticipate play-times and work-times.

During my industrial training, I was met with an unfortunate accident and was unable to continue my internship. Crushed and defeated by my current situation, I felt lost and was close to giving up. I asked my academic supervisor, Dr Ke, what I should do. Without hesitating, she prioritised my health and offered me an internship opportunity under HWUM's Psych Department.

Because of her and my amazing supervisors, Ms Aisyah and Professor Glenn, I was able to successfully finish my internship and gained so much knowledge and many skills while also prioritizing my health! I have immense gratitude for the fast decision they made and giving me the opportunity to work with a supportive team as it helped remarkably with my process towards recovery. I will never forget this incident as it opened my eyes to how supportive and caring our lecturers are!

As I got to spend time with him, I started to understand that he and I are not that different after all. In fact, the more I learned from these children, the more I understood about human psychology. My 3 months at the education centre proved to be one of my most valuable experiences as a psychology student. This experience has changed my perception of mental disabilities and individuals that experience them.



**Azib bin Aminuddin**  
BSc Psychology Year 3



# STUDENT STORIES



**Nur Ain Azhar**

BSc Psychology with  
Management 2023

Deciding that I should pursue further studies was at the top of my priorities in my life, which is why Heriot-Watt stood out to me as the “perfect” place to be and exactly how I envisioned my university life would be. The campus’s environment was the main attraction for me, the wide landscape, greenery all around and the large lake, along with the integration of highly advanced technology made it easier for the decision to be made.

While unfortunately, I had my campus life experience reduced due to the pandemic, I would still say that I had a good university life. Being that this is an international university, I was able to meet and connect with people from various and diverse backgrounds. It is safe to say, that I have made many good friends, allies, and a lifetime supply of good memories.

With heartfelt gratitude, I acknowledge the profound impact my professors have had on my university experience.

Their effective teaching styles left a lasting mark, guiding my growth through high standards and insightful feedback. One standout memory was a Psychology of Education project, where groups designed and built educational toys to address various developmental needs, then presented them to a panel of judges.

Silly child-friendly presentations evolved into meaningful discussions on innovation and improvement. All of us played the role of inventor, investor, and product tester, effortlessly bouncing ideas off each other.

I extend my gratitude to my professors for their effort in creating this enlightening project. It showcases the power of collaboration, and is evidence that knowledge can be applied in surprising ways when students are given the freedom to be creative.



**Nilam Karmila Binti  
Jamin Jamil**

BSc Psychology 2023

# STUDENT STORIES



**Kek Yee Ying**

BSc Psychology 2019/20

Being a psychology student at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia has been an invaluable learning journey for me. During my final year, I was invited by my supervisor to work on publishing my final year project. At first, I had a mixed feelings of excitement and concerns. I became indecisive as I questioned if my project was worth publishing.

I'm sincerely grateful to my supervisor and lecturer who reached out to me, motivated me and resolved my worries. Regardless of whether the paper will be accepted, it will always be an extraordinary and memorable learning experience for me.

During the second year of my degree, I have been through the most challenging year where I struggled between multiple roles, as a psychology student, a club leader and the Wellness Officer. Tethered to my inherent perfectionist tendencies, I set lofty goals as a leader, yet I couldn't manage my work-study-life balance. When I had entailed strenuous effort but could no longer sustain excellence in all spheres of responsibility, I realized the state of burnout.

It took several months to work through these challenges and readjust my life. This turned out to be a positive change as I introspected about my motivations for studying psychology and my life purpose. While studying psychology often means I overanalyse my thoughts, triggering self-criticism and high expectations, it also encourages self-reflection and helps me to navigate my personal journey of growth.

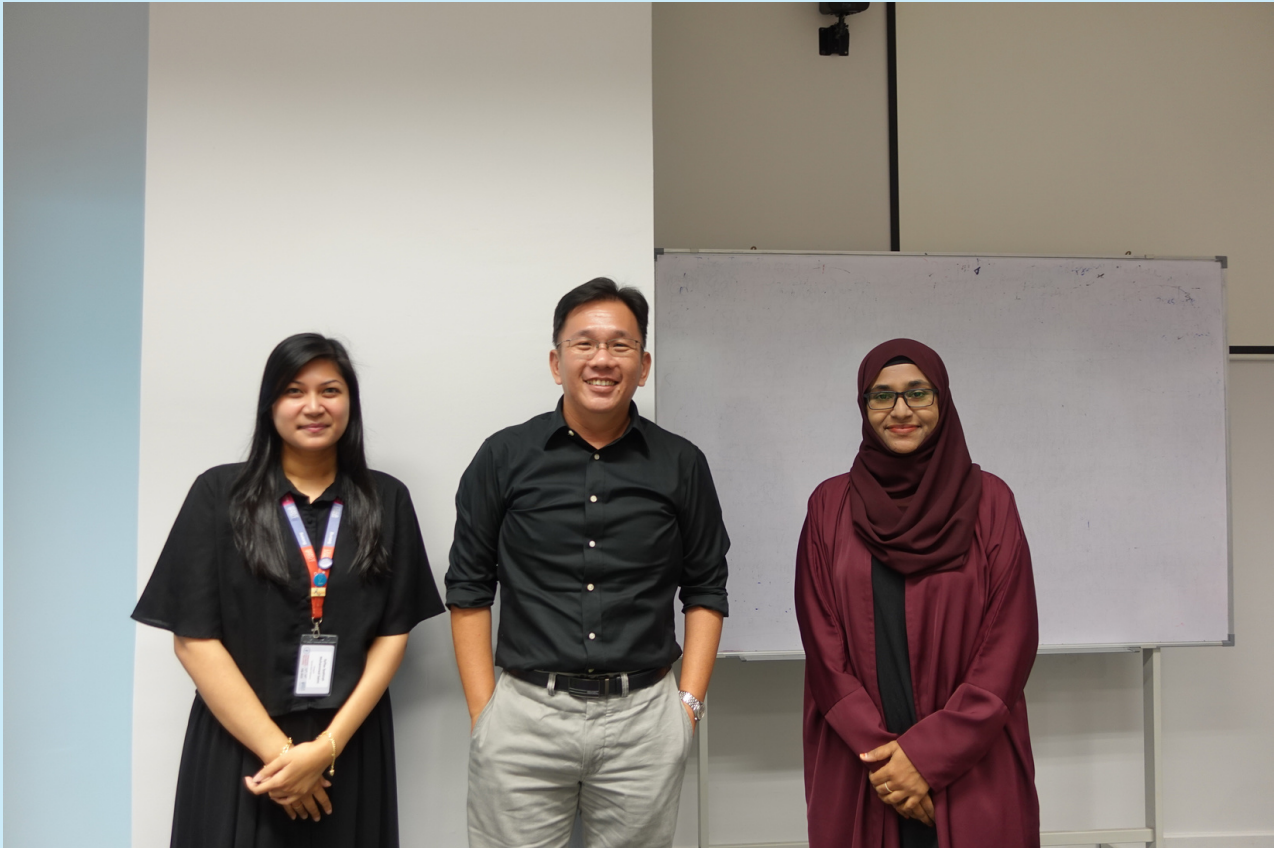


**Shandy Chong Pei Xuen**

BSc Psychology Year 3



# PHD STORIES




 Sofia Rudy


Hi, my name is Sofia, I'm currently in my final year of BSc psychology. I'll be the interviewer for today.

 Sharmila Fathima

Hello, my name is Sharmila. I'm an educator and currently pursuing my PhD in the School of Social Sciences at HW. The topic of my PhD is on critical thinking, specifically on critical thinking dispositions.

 Syifaa Syahirah

Hello, my name is Syifaa. I'm also doing my PhD, in the field of coaching psychology.

 Soo Toh Seng San

Hi, my name is Soo Toh Seng San. I'm a second year Psychology PhD student here at Heriot-Watt University. My PhD thesis revolves around the development of critical thinking in university students.



# PHD STORIES



 Sofia Rudy

**Why did you decide to do a PhD?**

**3 reasons**

- It connected to my vision and purpose in life which is to raise youth with exceptional values, character and knowledge.
- Being a mother of two I wanted to offer a quality education for my kids.
- I wish that instructors had more pedagogical approaches to deal with classmates who were challenged academically

 Sharmila Fathima

I just finished my Master's in Business Psychology. I was waiting for graduation and Dr. Ke approached me saying that there was an opening for a coaching psychology PhD programme, a topic that I was interested in. So I took the opportunity and it's been a really good experience to be able to pursue something of my interest.

 Sylfaa Syahirah

 Soo Toh Seng San

The main reason for me to go after a PhD is because this is an opportunity for me to pursue my passion for academia. My father wanted me to do this since I was a child because he didn't have the opportunity to study so he quit school in his early years.

# PHD STORIES

 Sofia Rudy

**Why study for a PhD at Heriot-Watt? What are the advantages of taking a PhD here?**

 Sharmila Fathima

One of the top reasons is it is very much connected to my passion and my vision in life, which is to raise youth with exceptional values, character and knowledge. I'm very much interested in positive education and one of the main reasons that attracted me towards the PhD programme at HW was my supervisor, Professor Deborah Hall, because she's been a renowned expert in this field of positive education and looking at her credentials I was like "this is the person I want to work with!" and I wanted to work under her guidance too.

 Syifaa Syahirah

The course that they offer is really engaging and the knowledge that you gain in HW, they prepare you for the future and they prepare you to be a very good employee because you're learning from very good and established educators.

 Sofia Rudy


**Any advice to current students who are planning to take a PhD in Psychology?**

 Syifaa Syahirah

Don't be afraid to pursue your PhD. Some people make it seem very hard to pursue, but don't be afraid of it. If you have the passion for it then just go for it. There's support for you in order for you to complete your PhD.

 Sharmila Fathima

Everybody should have a purpose. Whether it's in your life or studies everybody should have a vision and a purpose so the same applies to getting your PhD. Before you even go for a PhD ask yourself, why am I doing a PhD? What is the purpose of me doing this PhD? What am I trying to achieve? So you have the clarity from the beginning rather than wasting 1 or 2 years asking yourself 'what am I doing?'

 Soo Toh Seng San

This is a piece of advice that I've always given to students: Once you finish your UG degree it is best to at least work for 2-3 years before you go after your Master's degree because that way you learn more.

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## CULTIVATING MINDS: ONE PHD STUDENT'S VISION FOR A CRITICAL THINKING NATION



### SHARMILA FATHIMA

"I am a catalyst. My purpose is to raise youth with exceptional values, character and knowledge. I endeavour to empower youth with critical skills to be leaders for the positive transformation of this world."

Stepping into the realm of a Ph.D. in Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt University, I found myself on an odyssey unlike any other—a journey that stirred both my intellect and my heart. This academic pursuit has led me down a path that centres on a profound question: What if we could foster a nation where critical thinking thrives at its core? This is the driving force behind my doctoral exploration. Join me as we venture beyond the boundaries of traditional academia, into the uncharted territories of transforming education and human development. It's a quest that knows no bounds!

Stepping into the world of my Ph.D. adventure, I set out on a captivating quest to unravel the mysteries of critical thinking. Through meticulous research and a systematic review, I dived into a treasure of knowledge encompassing various critical thinking skills and dispositions and how they impact education. This thrilling journey not only honed my research skills but also laid the groundwork for the intriguing questions that now guide my Ph.D. exploration.

My Ph.D. journey began with a bang! Presenting a poster of my initial findings at MAPSA 2022 (The Malaysian Psychology Students Assembly) was an incredible start. The conference offered a valuable platform to receive feedback from fellow researchers and practitioners in the Social Sciences. The diverse audience provided fresh perspectives and constructive insights that have since shaped my research trajectory.

During this exciting phase of my Ph.D. journey, I took charge and orchestrated not just one, but two consensus meetings that brought together the brilliant minds of both students and staff members! The goal was to collectively pinpoint and prioritise the most essential critical thinking dispositions needed to supercharge our students' thinking skills. Picture a room buzzing with vibrant discussions and intellectual sparks flying as we collaborated to build a rock-solid framework for understanding these critical thinking dispositions and their potential impact in our educational settings. Trust me, these collaborative sessions turned out to be an absolute goldmine of insights!

In 2023, I stood amongst passionate educators and researchers at the prestigious Improving University Teaching (IUT) conference. My poster took centre stage, advocating for the integration of critical thinking dispositions in education. Minds buzzed with excitement as I unveiled the findings from the two consensus meetings. Together, we unlocked the transformative potential of nurturing these dispositions, facilitating more creative and reflective thinkers. Fellow scholars from across the globe resonated with my insights, igniting a shared mission to cultivate the minds of tomorrow.

My PhD journey at Heriot-Watt University has been a whirlwind of exciting learning opportunities! From captivating webinars and dynamic training workshops to stepping up as a panel speaker on education-related topics, I have embraced it all with zeal. The best part? The overwhelming positivity I encountered in the form of invaluable guidance and support from my supervisors and academic staff. My supervisor, Professor Deborah Hall, a world-renowned expert, has been an awe-inspiring mentor throughout my Ph.D. Her unwavering support and guidance have infused my academic journey with passion and purpose, leaving me deeply grateful for the invaluable lessons and inspiration she has shared. These experiences didn't just expand my knowledge base; they supercharged my expertise, leaving me brimming with valuable insights and a newfound passion for my field. Heriot-Watt University is truly a catalyst for my academic growth!



# CHARITIES

## Diveheart Malaysia



Diveheart's mission is "To build confidence, independence and self-esteem in the lives of children, adults and veterans with disabilities through scuba diving, scuba therapy and related activities". The main Diveheart office resides in Chicago, United States, led by the President Jim Elliott. Diveheart Malaysia is led by Ambassador Syed Abdul Rahman and organises frequent events for People with Disabilities, often at one of the Tropicana pools as well as island trips to Perhentian, Tioman and Tenggol. Additionally, Syed Rahman is the Chairman of WG 14 Accessible Tourism Committee Malaysia which allows him to promote Diveheart to a wider audience.

During the summer, the HWUM Psychology community had several engagements with Diveheart. Three of our students provided assistance during local pool Scuba Therapy sessions and Dr. Ron joined the international trip to Mamutik Island in September. Footage from this event will be featured in the sequel to the award-winning documentary "Adapting to Dive".

Syed Rahman said "We truly appreciate Heriot-Watt University Malaysia for strengthening our collaboration with the MOU signing on March 1, 2023. We hope more students and staff will become Diveheart volunteers and join future events. Furthermore, we'd welcome the opportunity to engage in collaborative research that benefits our special community and can make inclusive tourism in Malaysia (and beyond) a priority for everyone."

In November, Dr. Ron started a research project with two of our students to explore the benefits of scuba diving therapy. The results will be presented at the International Congress of Psychology 2024.

**DIVEHEART MALAYSIA 2023**

3-6 SEP 2023  
MAMUTIK ISLAND  
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Organised by:

For more information, please contact:  
Malaysia: Syed Abd Rahman +6019-317 6705 Ernest Teo +6012-889 2336

Partners:

PUSAT PERUBATAN UNIVERSITI MALAYA RHB Islamic HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY PADI

# COMMUNITIES

## Interview with Selene from Yayasan Tengku Abdul Rahman (YTAR)



### *What is YTAR?*

YTAR was founded in the 1960s. It was set up as a fund and financial support system for the education of Malaysian students. It was named after Tunku Abdul Rahman because he was the first PM back then. Originally, YTAR only provided financial assistance, but they now embrace a more holistic focus through their CTG programme. A group of YTAR students had the great fortune to attend a series of psychology classes at HWUM.

### *What is the main goal of the CTG programme?*

The main purpose of CTG is to support underrepresented students, predominantly from B40 families or students who are the first in their family to enter university. CTG provides them with the skills, guidance and motivation to enter higher education. A lot of students have the potential to thrive in a university setting but do not realise it or receive the right guidance to get there.

### *What were the benefits of the psychology classes offered to the students?*

The limited course choices at university prompt many students to explore psychology, leading them to discover unexpected interests in different areas of science. This exposure helps them conceptualise terms like 'feminism' and 'mental health' in a more structured and theoretical manner, enhancing their understanding and knowledge.

### *Why did you choose psychology out of all the courses?*

University students find enjoyment in studying personality and self-discovery, aspects not typically addressed in schools where subjects tend to be purely theoretical. Schools lack a focus on personal identification and mental health, despite having counsellors. The inclusion of such topics in university education can enhance self-awareness, sparking students' interest in understanding daily phenomena they may be unaware of.

### *What's your hope for the future in terms of the collaboration with Heriot-Watt University and their Psychology Department?*

The hope is that students attending residential camps, exposed to psychology tutorials, will be motivated to apply for the Leaders Impact Scholarship and pursue studies in psychology. In 2021, two scholars who applied for the scholarship are currently engaged in business, indicating a desire to diversify academic pursuits beyond STEM courses and include psychology.



# COMMUNITIES

## Psychology Society



The Psychology Society is a thriving charity/community at our university that aims to foster a supportive and engaging environment for psychology enthusiasts. Our mission is to promote mental health awareness, organise educational events, and provide opportunities for networking and personal growth.

In the previous academic year, the Psychology Society successfully conducted a range of meaningful events and activities. One of the events that attracted a lot of students is the Love Note event. We set up a big board for the students to anonymously spread positive messages / love to their friends. Additionally, we also had a chance to meet with members of the British Psychology Society when they visited our campus last year.

The collaboration between the Psychology Society and the Psychology Department has been invaluable. Faculty members actively support our events by sharing their expertise and encouraging student participation. By working together, we hope to further enhance mental health initiatives on campus and create a lasting positive impact within our university community.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

NEURODIVERSITY TALK

**JAN 28**

**FEB 14**

VALENTINE'S DAY EVENT

PSYCHOLOGY DAY



**FEB 24**

**FEB 24**

“DRIVEN BY PURPOSE”

Campaign launch

SUREWORKS KL



**MAR 9, 10**

**MAR 12**

COPING MECHANISMS

Art Therapy using Crochet

SUREWORKS JB



**MAR 16, 17**

**MAR 16, 17**



OPEN DAY

APPLICATION DAY



**MAR 24**

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