**Importance of critical thinking**

HOW much control do you have over your decision-making process? According to Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman, our thinking can be categorised into two parts: the intuitive, characteristically automatic and fast, and the rational, typically logical and slow. Proper understanding of our cognitive limitations is necessary to optimise our decision-making potential. Employers around the world have emphasised the need for critical thinking skills to be instilled in graduates. Realising this, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia provides an opportunity for students to maximise their potential in this respect with its annual Watt Malaysia Exhibition and Conference (WattMEC). This event serves as a platform for students to transform the skills and knowledge learned in project-based courses into effective solutions to address the challenges faced by society, particularly in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WattMEC is mapped to the EMPower programme under the Critical Thinking and Decision Making domain. WattMEC 2019, which was recently held, saw the participation of undergraduates from various programmes including Chemical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Civil Engineering, Quantity Surveying and Construction Project Management.

Speaking on “Engineering a Healthy and Flourishing Career”, Peter Geoffery, managing director of The Energy Institute – Asia Pacific, emphasised renewable energy and expanded on its relevance to SDG 7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All.

The talk highlighted future energy security and how each person can play a role in reshaping future energy supply. The event was an enriching learning experience for the students, allowing for deeper understanding of the main concepts that underpin critical thinking and decision making through a series of steps that involved identifying the challenge statement, methodology, weighing decisions and appraising the best solution. External assessors from industries were also invited to the event, giving students the chance to maximise their experience through interactions and knowledge sharing.

Prof Dr Denny Ng, associate head of the university’s School of Engineering and Physical Sciences, said: “WattMEC is a great platform for students to present their work and receive feedback from different perspectives. Undergraduate students get early exposure to the real-world international sustainable agenda and contribute to the development within their own campus.”

The EMPower grant, aimed at enhancing “critical thinking writing in the grant application process, was awarded during the event. One of the winners, Muhammad Azim, who is studying BEng in Computer Science and Information Technology, said: “My vision is to see the implementation of new methods which can achieve three-dimensional mapping to capture data from their surroundings through the IoT. One day, drones could save lives by maneuvering into places beyond human capabilities and making data collected to solve challenges around the world.”

This grant has reminded him of how he is responsible to make the world a better place,” he said.

For details on the engineering programmes offered by Heriot-Watt University Malaysia as well as other courses and scholarships, visit its campus in Putrajaya during its Application Day on Aug 24 or find out more during consultation hours from 9am to 5pm on Mondays to Fridays and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays. Alternatively, log on to www.hw.edu.my or call 03-8984 3888 or e-mail hwwun@hw.ac.uk

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**Be the best in your field**

WHEN you choose a career path, do you look to becoming the best in your field? If so, here are some ideas to help you on your journey.

First, read a book by an expert on what it takes to be successful. There are lots of self-help books and biographies available so if you want to become a pilot, lawyer or photographer, pick up a book by a professional that discusses how he or she did it. You can learn to avoid common errors and discover what really matters in life by looking at how others reach the top.

Second, be prepared to do a lot of work. If you were simple to be fantastic at something, everyone would be a genius. As the American inventor Thomas Edison pointed out, “Genius is one per cent inspiration and 99 per cent perspiration.”

This means that your education should come first. Plan to study between lectures and don’t expect a constant stream of holidays and long weekends. Those come when you hit the top.

Third, when you’re learning, you might focus just on the goal but with most complex tasks, it’s a process. If you learn to analyse the process and recognise the separate parts, then you can find ways to improve speed and quality. This makes learning more efficient.