

A growing collaboration

WORKING TOGETHER:

Bilateral educational cooperation in areas of research between Australia and Malaysia is set to increase following a visit from a collective of world-class Australian universities

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AUSTRALIA and Malaysia have a long tradition of tie-ups in education, going back to the Colombo Plan which began in 1950.

Three Australian universities now have campuses in Malaysia and approximately 22,000 Malaysian students study Australian programmes in Malaysia.

It was against this favourable backdrop for further cooperation that 21 vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, senior academics and researchers from Australia's Innovative Research Universities (IRU) visited Malaysia for five days beginning June 11.

"The purpose of the visit is to enhance the long-standing relationship between the two countries and to look at new areas where we can develop, particularly in research areas," says IRU Chair and Griffith University vice chancellor Professor Ian O'Connor.

A collective of seven research-intensive universities, the member universities of IRU comprise Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University and the University of Newcastle.

They teach over 175,000 students each year, including 42,000 international students.

It was the group's first trip to Malaysia and



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Ian O'Connor

it followed the signing of the Malaysia Australia Free Trade Agreement last month, comprising 21 chapters encompassing trade, services and investment as well as economic cooperation.

Malaysia is currently Australia's third largest trading partner in the

education sector, where the Australian export value to Malaysia for education-related travel amounts to A\$770 million (RM2.443 billion).

Elodie Journet, Australian Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner to Malaysia and Brunei, says: "The Australian and Malaysian governments have identified education, research and innovation as critical components of our nations' development.

"We welcome this visit by the IRU as a unique opportunity to strengthen existing research linkages between Australia and Malaysia's research universities to boost our bilateral cooperation."

Although Malaysians only comprise six per cent of foreign students in Australia, the coun-

try is one of the most popular overseas education and training destinations for Malaysian students, with more than 300,000 Malaysians having studied there.

In 2010 alone, more than 23,000 Malaysians enrolled in Australian institutions.

The IRU chose to visit Malaysia due to the extraordinary progress being made in the area of education.

"Malaysia has developed impressively in the research and education sector. What we hope for is to get into a series of deeper collaboration," says O'Connor.

Areas of partnership that the IRU is looking into cover aspects such as student and staff exchanges, provision of scholarships



An open day at the University of Newcastle. Australia is one of the most popular education destination for Malaysians



Elodie Journet



Amir Mahmood



John Rosenberg



Ketheesan Natkunam

...of the most popular overseas educa-

to encourage postgraduate students to conduct research and opportunities for joint research.

For a start, Griffith University signed Memoranda of Understanding with four public universities — Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, University of Malaya, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman and Universiti Teknologi MARA.

“Research is international. No country can rely solely on what its own researchers discover. To access the international world of research effectively, both Australia and Malaysia need their researchers to work with each other, testing their research to improve outcomes,” adds O’Connor.

University of Newcastle Acting Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Amir Mahmood says that the university’s strength lies in the Health Sciences, Management and Services sector.

“I believe we can assist our Malaysian counterparts in these areas and at the same time we can learn from them,” says Mahmood.

Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor of La Trobe University Professor John Rosenberg says “our university already has tie-ups with Malaysian researchers in the field of Islamic Banking and I would like to seek more opportunities for joint research in this area. We are also strong in the Social Sciences and I know that it’s one of the areas the Malaysian government wants to develop”.

Professor Ketheesan Natkunam of James Cook University’s School of Veterinary and Medical Sciences says: “The similarity of climate between Malaysia and the state of Queensland (where James Cook University is located) will facilitate research in the area of tropical infectious diseases such as dengue.”

The highlight of the five-day visit was the Australia-Malaysia Research and Innovation Forum co-hosted by the Australian High Commission and Malaysia’s Ministry of Higher Education.

Attended by more than 90 individuals from Malaysia’s academia, the forum focused on the current trends and approaches to research and key elements of interest within research communities, and its relation to nations across the globe.

The visit also comprised meetings and site visits to the five Malaysian public research universities — University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia — and the Iskandar Education City.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NUMBERS 2011

Total IRU	42,151
Charles Darwin University*	683
Flinders University	3,735
Griffith University	10,967
James Cook University	5,780
La Trobe University	8,782
Murdoch University	6,298
The University of Newcastle	5,906

International R&D students 2011

Total (IRU)	2,013
Charles Darwin University*	45
Flinders University	226
Griffith University	371
James Cook University	308
La Trobe University	482
Murdoch University	175
The University of Newcastle	406

Total students 2011

Total (IRU)	175,158
Charles Darwin University*	8,586
Flinders University	19,758
Griffith University	41,971
James Cook University	19,508
La Trobe University	31,981
Murdoch University	19,718
The University of Newcastle	33,636

Percentage of international students 2011

Total (IRU)	24
Charles Darwin University*	8
Flinders University	19
Griffith University	26
James Cook University	30
La Trobe University	27
Murdoch University	32
The University of Newcastle	18

* Dual sector university. Charles Darwin University also enrolls over 13,367 vocational, education and training students each year. Source: IRU Member Universities 2011 figures

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY REGION



