



(From left) Prof Graham Kendall, UPM's vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris, Sultan of Selangor Sharafuddin Idris Shah, University of Nottingham's vice-chancellor Prof Shearer West and University of Nottingham's pro-vice-chancellor for global engagement Prof Nick Miles.

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More than a walk across the stage

GRADUATION is a significant event for any university student. As you walk across the stage, it symbolises the transition from graduand to graduate.

We all recognise the hard work invested that gives graduands the right to make that short walk, shake the vice-chancellor's hand and receive their scroll.

The walk may take less than 20 seconds, but it is the culmination of years of hard work and, in many cases, stress, worry and fear that this day would never arrive.

A degree from one of the world's leading institutions provides an excellent platform for graduates to kick-start their career and ambitions. Indeed, a common feature of speeches delivered at our graduation ceremonies is about how education can transform lives.

Having not started my studies until I was 35 years old and now being in the privileged position of leading the University of Nottingham Malaysia, I am a testament to that, and not a day goes by when I do not reflect on how education transformed my life and career.

However, graduation ceremonies are not just about handing over certificates, they also enable a university to do many other things.

Not least of all, the university is able to present itself in a more formal way. The academic staff dress in robes representing the institution that awarded their highest degree. Our professional services staff also wear robes to add to the grandeur of the occasion.

The people leading the ceremony, typically the vice-chancellor, provost and pro-vice chancellors, wear black and gold to signify the leading role they play.

Graduation also provides the opportunity for words of advice to be given to the new graduates. These are often given by those leading the ceremony but, at Nottingham, we also ask a member of our alumni or one of the fresh graduates to address the congregation.

We encourage them to speak openly and honestly but offer words of gratitude where they are warranted.

At our February graduation ceremonies, we were delighted that Wong Ee Phin and Ng Zheng Yu were gracious enough to address the congregation on behalf of all who were graduating.

By
**PROF
GRAHAM
KENDALL**



We are always surprised that our chosen speakers invariably deliver their speeches with passion and aplomb, and Ng and Wong were no exception. Both are to be congratulated on delivering speeches that will remain in the memory of the congregation for a long time.

At graduation ceremonies, we also offer honorary awards to luminaries we wish to honour for having served the university, higher education sector or wider community.

The nomination and selection for these significant awards undergo a robust university process to ensure that the person is "eminently worthy" – as we say in the oration when presenting the honorary recipient to the congregation – of an honorary doctorate from the University of Nottingham.

At the February graduation ceremony, we were delighted that His Royal Highness Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj Ibni Almarhum Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Alhaj of Selangor accepted an honorary doctorate.

Nottingham has been operating in Malaysia for almost 20 years and we are located in the state over which the Sultan rules. The university wanted to recognise this as well as the 60th anniversary of the country's independence from the United Kingdom last year.

It was a privilege to have the Sultan visit our campus. We were also delighted to welcome Universiti Putra Malaysia's vice-chancellor Prof Datin Paduka Datuk Dr Aini Ideris, who was invited by the Sultan.

Graduation ceremonies are primarily about celebrating the success of our graduates, but they also offer the opportunity for the university to show off a little, and we enjoy doing that.

■ Prof Graham Kendall is the chief executive officer, provost and pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Nottingham Malaysia.
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