

# An international touch

Today's employees must be able to work in different global environments which is why TAR College is giving its students an avenue to soak up the experiences of the world.

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**S**INCE its inception, Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR College) has always focused on providing a meaningful tertiary experience for all.

After striving to do this locally for the past four decades, it appears that the higher education institution is adopting a more international approach.

According to its principal Dr Tan Chik Heok, the college is looking at giving more of its students an avenue to pursue their studies overseas.

"This is not to say that foreign education is superior - that's hardly the issue," he says.

"To work in a multinational company these days literally means to work anywhere in the world, so students need to be equipped with a global outlook and be able to adapt to different cultural environments.

"And of course, they must be able to do this cost-efficiently."

## Going overseas

One way TAR College is nudging its young charges out to soak up the experiences of the world is through its unique "top-up" programmes.

Vice-principal Lim See Wah explains that the programme allows advanced diploma students to further their studies at partner institutions in the United Kingdom (UK).

"Students will first spend four years here, before proceeding to the UK for three and a half months," she says.

"At the end of the day, they receive an advanced diploma from us, and a bachelor's degree from the partner institution - at a total cost of less than RM50,000."

Lim adds that students are even able to pursue a foreign post-graduate qualification.

"Birmingham City University, UK, for example, admits our Advance Diploma in Commerce and Financial Accounting students to do their MSc in Accountancy.

"These students will only require six months to obtain their masters qualification, so this clearly demonstrates the calibre of our students."

Tan says that it is important that students have a taste of living abroad, without having to break the bank.

"In fact, the idea for these courses came about during the 1997 economic crisis, when many students could not afford to go abroad.

"We responded to this need the best we could, because we didn't want the crisis to affect students' opportunities for personal and professional growth.

"We're currently in the process of working out more collaborations with other universities around the world - and I daresay that this might be the trend for the future."

## Real-world standards

Tan is quick to point out that such collaborations with foreign universities are only made possible due to the standard of TAR College students.

"Many of these institutions are willing to take in and give concessions for our students because they acknowledge our quality.

"On our part, we have consciously benchmarked our diploma and advanced diploma qualifications at a high level, so as to enable students to secure employment or further their studies with ease."

Indeed, TAR College reputation has been built on its focus on professional and industry-based qualifications.

It is not uncommon for students to study for professional certifications or undergo industrial training alongside their regular classes for a college diploma.

"We work at intergrating such certifica-



Dr Tan thinks that "top-up" courses will be a future trend.

The college's new Cyber Centre will be a focal point for its online learning initiative.



tions into our curriculum, so that students are prepared for the working world when they graduate," says Tan.

"For example, our information technology students will sit for Microsoft, Novell, Cisco and various other professional examinations during their course of study."

The college also maintains a panel of advisers for all its disciplines of study, to provide feedback on industry needs and trends.

Tan says that this enables curriculum developers to respond to real-life changes quickly.

"Each school will engage in a dialogue with its respective panel every semester, to learn about the current status of the industry and identify new areas.

"What's more, some of them give us feedback as employers, so we can tell if our graduates are up to mark!"

He adds that the college's new Cyber Centre at its Setapak campus will further improve the teaching and learning of courses.

"The centre will be the main point of all our online learning resources, and will provide students with easy internet access."

## All in the family

Aside from marketable qualifications, Tan expounds on another reason as to why TAR College graduates have no problems in getting jobs.

"We have around 140,000 alumni members in all areas of industry.

"Besides sharing expertise with their alma matter, they also offer job opportunities and internships to our current students.

"So, students who come here have a big 'family' taking care of them."

As Tan recounts the college's successful graduates and their contributions, it is clear that the rules of karma sit well with the higher education institution.

"Our mission is to provide quality education to the needy and deserving, so our graduates feel thankful for the opportunity.

"As they contribute their time and resources for the current batch of students, my hope is that this cycle of goodwill will continue."

TAR College is a contributor to the Star Education Fund.