



**OPENING REMARKS**  
**DATO' SERI ABDUL RAZAK BIN JAAFAR**  
**SECRETARY GENERAL**  
**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**2022 AUSTRALIA-MALAYSIA VIRTUAL PHD**  
**INTERNSHIP MINI SYMPOSIUM**

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**DATE : OCTOBER 6, 2022 (THURSDAY)**

**TIME : 9.00 AM – 3.00 PM**

**LOCATION : AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION**  
**KUALA LUMPUR**

## ***BISMILLAHIRRAHMANIRRAHIM***

*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*

Good morning

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this 2022 Australia-Malaysia Virtual PhD Internship Mini Symposium. I am very glad to acknowledge the Australian Deputy High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ms Hannah Birdsey, keynote speaker, participants and guests joining us. I would like to warmly welcome representatives from public universities who are with us online on the Zoom platform today.
2. I would also like to extend my deepest appreciation to those who have been involved in organising this event. What we see before us today is a testament of their hard work. Special thanks to the Australian High Commission team, the host for today's event.
3. Today we are holding a mini symposium which aims to highlight and also celebrate the journey of 10 Malaysian PhD students who participated in the virtual internship program which they have embarked on since July this year. The 10 candidates in the fields of social sciences, humanities and education were carefully selected by

the team from the Department of Higher Education Malaysia and the Department of Education, Australia and I believe that they are the best candidates to represent Malaysia in this program. I am happy knowing that this 2022 Malaysia-Australia Virtual PhD Internship programme is the first of its kind to be delivered virtually and in South East Asia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION & VIRTUAL/ONLINE LEARNING**

4. In the last two years, the world has been forced to migrate from physical classrooms and lecture halls to the digital world, and COVID-19 has accelerated this process. In response to the 'new normal' resulting from the global pandemic, Malaysia's higher learning institutions have accelerated their e-learning initiatives and markedly improved the creation and delivery of their Open and Distance Learning (ODL) practices.
5. In truth, ODL has been an emerging trend for some time and it managed to open up access to quality education, create lifelong learning opportunities, flexible modes of learning methods and conducive learning environment for young school leavers, university communities and the working population at large. However, it is only now that ODL practices have made a strong positive mark on education, particularly in the Malaysian higher education sector.

6. At the same time, the Malaysian higher education sector is progressing rapidly spurred by the changes brought by Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0). For these institutions to attain and maintain its institutional sustainability, it is of paramount importance that they must continue to improve their teaching and learning delivery systems to produce quality graduates who are ready for the future-oriented careers, in line with the mission and vision of the Malaysian Higher Education Framework 4.0 espoused by this Ministry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **THE CASE FOR CHANGE THROUGH FUTURE-ORIENTED POLICIES**

7. Malaysia, Australia and other nations of the world cannot afford to be left behind in the wave of changes happening in the higher education sector. In the Malaysian context, to deal with these changes, we must leverage and take advantage of future-oriented policies to remain competitive and relevant. The Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint, for instance, through Thrust 4: 'Build Agile and Competent Digital Talent' focuses on improving coordination and interaction between higher education institutions and students, and also on improving the capability of students to be future work-ready.
8. There are also other initiatives that are built on the existing partnership between the government, academia dan industry. The elevation of Malaysia-Australia bilateral relations to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) during the inauguration

of the Malaysia-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting on 27 January 2021 recognises that bilateral commitment between both countries has been expanded to a more extensive engagement. The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Higher Education, which is the hallmark of the higher education cooperation under the CSP, will further invigorate education cooperation, institutional partnerships and student plus researcher mobility. In this regard, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia strives to leverage on the CSP by having future initiatives, which I foresee will be crafted on the strong basis of goodwill and friendship between both countries, that has strengthened throughout the years.

9. Moving forward, Malaysia will continue to recognise that it is pivotal for higher education institutions to invest in education technology infrastructure and network backbones to harness cutting-edge learning trends effectively. Without a shadow of doubt, as technology develops and becomes even more reliable and advanced, future generations will no longer question the need for online learning and teaching but rather to embrace them, together with the opportunities and prospects that they bring for the individual, community and Malaysian society as a whole.

### **MALAYSIA AS AN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION HUB**

10. The Government of Malaysia through MoHE, has been working towards developing Malaysia into an international higher education hub. With 131,000 international students currently enrolled in our

higher education institutions, we target to host 250,000 foreign students by 2025. With that being said, MoHE will be intensifying collaborative initiatives such as student mobility programs with the launching of the EduTourism Program which merges education and tourism sectors.

11. In the recent event between Malaysia and Australia, I wish to recap on the Australian Institution Familiarisation Visit that was held in the early month of September where seven (7) institutions from Australia were invited to Malaysia to enjoy cultural, historical and tourism experience as part of the promotional framework of our EduTourism program. In this matter, I again wish to express our hope to be in the top five (5) destinations for the New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility program for Australian students. This, I believe is very much in line with Malaysia's aspiration to become the international higher education hub in this region.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. In closing, I want to thank each and everyone of you for taking the time to show your support to our 10 Malaysian PhD students who will be showcasing their virtual internship experiences and outcomes in this mini symposium. The notion of a virtual internship, in and or itself, might be strange and alien to the average person. That being said,

through the expertise and support of their Australian virtual supervisors and universities, together with the relentless effort and sheer grit shown by our 10 Malaysian PhD students, I sincerely believe that this project is a resounding success for all involved. Let us all put our hands together and cheer their success.

13. Congratulations to one and all, keep up the good work and I sincerely hope everyone today will find this mini symposium an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Lastly, let us not say “goodbye” but rather “see you all again”, hopefully in the next Malaysia-Australia PhD internship project in 2023 or even sooner.

Thank you.