



ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES



The handover of the AAOU flag from Prof. Dr. Ali Muktiyanto, former AAOU President (2023-2025) to Dr. Wang Qiming, current AAOU President (2026-2028)

AAOU Leadership Handover: Newly Elected President and Secretary-General Take Office from 2026 to 2028

The Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) successfully held its 38th Annual Conference in Beijing, China, from 20 to 23 October 2025. In parallel, the AAOU held its General Body Meeting on 22 October 2025, where the Open University of China (OUC) was announced to assume the next Presidency of AAOU (2026-2028).

Since 1 January 2026, **Dr. Wang Qiming** and **Madam Fan Xianrui** have officially taken up their roles as **President and Secretary-General of AAOU**. In the next three years, the OUC will spare no effort to enhance regional collaboration in open and distance education, actively promote the sharing of high-quality educational resources among members, and strive to build a more inclusive and innovative platform for academic exchanges and capacity building, contributing to the advancement of education for all in the region.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AAOU Leadership Handover: Newly Elected President and Secretary-General Take Office from 2026 to 2028

The 39th AAOU Annual Conference 2026

Member News

OUM to Launch Southeast Asian Fellowship 2026-27: Sociodigital Futures of Southeast Asia

UT to Hold the 4th International Conference on Teaching and Learning (ICTL) 2026

UT to Hold BINAR 2026 International Summer Camp

One Year to Go: ICDE Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Conference 2027

WOU: Flexible Learning as a Catalyst for Career Advancement

WOU: Malaysia's Role in the Global Semiconductor Race: Industry Experts Convene to Explore the Case for a Semiconductor Institute

Partnership

COL and AAOU Expand Collaboration for Inclusive Open Learning

Open Calls

Call for 2026 Staff Exchange Fellowship Programme

Call for Hosting the 41st AAOU Annual Conference 2028

The 39th AAOU Annual Conference 2026

Raising the theme "Responding to Global Challenges Towards a Resilient and Future-Ready Open and Distance Education," this year the 39th AAOU Annual Conference is hosted by the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and will be held in Manila, the Philippines, from 22-24 October 2026.



Researchers, educators, policymakers, and practitioners are invited to submit their papers and participate in shaping the future of open and distance learning. The conference will be a critical platform for the exchange of latest research, the sharing of best practices, and the exploration of collaborative solutions.

Get your paper ready! More details on submission deadlines and website will be announced soon. **Contact of the conference organizing committee:** raalacerna@pup.edu.ph.

AAOU MEMBER NEWS

OUM to Launch Southeast Asian Fellowship 2026-27: Sociodigital Futures of Southeast Asia

The Centre for Digital Education Futures (CENDEF) at Open University Malaysia (OUM) has officially announced the call for applications for the **Southeast Asian Fellowship 2026-27**. This new one-year initiative, scheduled to run from April 2026 through March 2027, focuses on the theme "Sociodigital Futures of Southeast Asia".

Structured as a **remote engagement**, up to five fellowships will be awarded. Fellows will work from their home bases with regular online dialogue and collaboration but are required to attend a public exhibition in **Kuala Lumpur** tentatively planned for late 2026.

This Fellowship is open to early-to mid-career academics with a higher education affiliation, as well as industry practitioners in technology, the arts, and related fields, who are

Southeast Asian. Priority will be given to applicants in and from the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

For the Fellows, each project will be supported to produce three key outputs:

- ▶ A webinar session showcasing work-in-progress for global audiences [by mid 2026].
- ▶ A 10-minute 3D immersive storytelling work based on the project to be produced in collaboration with artists and technologists paired by REXPERIENCE.KL [due late 2026]
- ▶ A scholarly publication or an equivalent output that contributes to a critical and regionally grounded understanding of Southeast Asia's sociodigital futures, and carries OUM-CENDEF affiliation [due early 2027].

Fellows will receive **up to USD 2,000 per Fellowship in seed support**, scholarly mentoring, covered travel and accommodation for the Kuala Lumpur public exhibition, etc. If you are interested in the Fellowship, please email your application to cendef@oum.edu.my with the subject line: "Application-SEA Fellowship 2026". Applications must be submitted via email by **30 March 2026**.

For further information and updates on the Fellowship, please visit <https://cendef.oum.edu.my/fellowships/seaf>

ICDE Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Conference 2027

The ICDE Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Conference 2027 will be hosted by ICDE and Inland Norway University from February 15th-17th, 2027, in Lillehammer, Norway. This event will bring together a global community of professionals, policymakers, researchers, and learners.

This conference will delve into the latest trends, challenges, and innovations in lifelong learning. It will build on the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Roadmap 2023-2027, focusing on how lifelong learning systems can

adapt to the rapidly changing world. Key topics will include digital transformation, demographic shifts, evolving labor market needs, and climate action.

Register your interest here:

<https://nyhetsbrev.inn.no/p/s/MjAyOTA6YWU1YzE0OGUtMTQ5S00MDJhLWlwZDYtNWZmOGM5NjY4ZmU4>

For more details, visit: <https://www.lillehammerlll.no/>

WOU: Flexible Learning as a Catalyst for Career Advancement

750 Working Professionals Graduate at WOU's 16th Convocation

Flexible learning continues to serve as a catalyst for career advancement among working adults, as more than 750 working professionals — 80% under the age of 40 — graduated at Wawasan Open University's (WOU) 16th Convocation from 21 to 23 November 2025.



From left to right: Prof Dr Lily Chan, Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Dato' Chang Ko Youn, Pro-Chancellor, Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar, Chancellor, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Chairman, Board of Governors, Prof Ts Dr Yap Eng Hwa, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

Of these, 182 were postgraduates and 573 undergraduates, with 80% under the age of 40. Graduates represented the Schools of Business & Administration; Technology & Engineering Science; Digital Technology; and Education, Humanities & Social Sciences.

The convocation also saw the pioneer batch of Bachelor of Digital Business students from the School of Digital Technology cross the stage, marking a milestone for WOU's innovative work-study model.

WOU Chancellor Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar reminded graduates that the world is evolving at extraordinary speed, driven by artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and data-driven innovation.

“The challenge is not to compete against the machine but to learn to work with it. In a world dominated by algorithms, your uniquely human qualities — empathy, critical thinking, integrity, and imagination — will set you apart,” he said.



Every scroll, every lecture, every late night — all worth it for this moment

WOU's Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan, reflected on the evolving role of higher education for working adults.

“Access alone is no longer enough. The question is not only how many can enter, but how many can advance, adapt, and create real impact. Today's graduates prove that with flexible, relevant, and supportive pathways, working adults can grow both professionally and personally,” she said.

“Most of our students juggle multiple responsibilities. Our role is to provide a system that fits their realities — flexible, digital, and recognising their experience. Their success today shows that working adults can advance when the right support structures are in place,” she added.

Prof Chan said that WOU will continue strengthening its partnerships with employers and industry associations to co-develop programmes that align with talent development and the future of work.

Held across six sessions at WOU's main campus in Penang, Malaysia, the convocation celebrated academic achievement while reaffirming the University's commitment to flexible, digitally enhanced learning that equips working adults to thrive in careers, broaden skills, and contribute meaningfully to society.

WOU: Malaysia's Role in the Global Semiconductor Race: Industry Experts Convene to Explore the Case for a Semiconductor Institute

Industry leaders, technology researchers and academia gathered at **Wawasan Open University (WOU)** on 4 December 2025 for a high-level Industry Roundtable hosted by the George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS), the non-profit institute within WOU that seeks to explore ideas and complexity within open societies.

Participants examined the strategic priorities Malaysia must address to remain competitive in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced semiconductor design.

The Roundtable took place against the backdrop of Malaysia's National AI Technology Action Plan 2026–



Tan Sri Andrew Sheng delivering his keynote address.

2030, which places human capital, innovation, and ecosystem development at the centre of intelligent-industry growth.

With multiple agencies and institutions advancing different parts of the semiconductor and AI agenda, speakers underscored the value of closer public-private-academic coordination to avoid fragmentation and unlock synergies.

Moderated by GIOAS Chairman Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, the session featured perspectives from across the semiconductor and AI value chain. Panellists included Dr Kewei Yang, Co-founder of Analogix Semiconductor Inc; Mr Leonard Tan, Director of Product Operations Engineering at Riot Games; and Assoc Prof Ts Dr Sean Tan Koon Tatt, Dean of WOU's School of Technology & Engineering Science.

Discussions focused on Penang's role in moving beyond manufacturing towards higher-value activities such as IC design, advanced packaging, AI-integrated engineering and deep-tech research. Key challenges identified included talent retention, access to patient capital for deep-tech



From left to right: Dr Kewei Yang, Mr Leonard Tan, Mr Ong Chin Hu, Mr Tan Li Jia, Assoc Prof Ts Dr Sean Tan Koon Tatt, and Tan Sri Andrew Sheng.

innovation, and the use of AI to drive productivity and value creation.

The Roundtable also explored the potential role of a dedicated semiconductor or advanced manufacturing institute. Such an institute could help align industry needs, talent development and long-term national strategy. Speakers underscored that Malaysia's competitiveness in the intelligent-industry era will depend on

effective coordination across sectors and institutions.

Potential roles discussed included serving as a platform to support startups, incumbent firms, government agencies and investors in co-creating a robust ecosystem. This could involve leveraging regional university linkages to tap talent and advising on immigration policies to attract foreign expertise.

PARTNERSHIP

COL and AAOU Expand Collaboration for Inclusive Open Learning

Through its continued partnership with the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), the **Commonwealth of Learning (COL)** is supporting more inclusive participation in the 38th AAOU Annual Conference, hosted by the Open University of China in Beijing in October 2025. COL's support for fellows covered conference registration for 10 educators from across Commonwealth countries, strengthening regional representation and ensuring diverse voices could participate in global discussions on open and distance learning (ODL).

Conference participants were able to present research, engage with peers from across the Commonwealth and beyond, and gain a deeper understanding of emerging topics, including artificial intelligence in education, digital education pedagogy, and quality assurance. Several fellows also highlighted that COL's support helped those who would otherwise not have been able to attend the conference.

Beyond professional development, the fellowship enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange. This included fellows developing new research partnerships, institutional connections, and opportunities to apply their innovative practices. The conference also provided a platform for attendees to be more inclusive and equitable in their educational approaches - a key driver of the work COL does, including in cross-cutting gender initiatives.

COL looks forward to continuing its partnerships as AAOU transitions its Secretariat to the Open University of China, expanding access to learning and building capacity across regions.

OPEN CALLS

Call for 2026 Staff Exchange Fellowship Programme

The AAOU Inter-University Staff Exchange Fellowship programme was introduced in 1997. The programme aims to foster the exchange of knowledge and experience in open and distance education and enhance the capacities of member institutions through mutual assistance and partnership. Any AAOU member institution (the donor) may contribute to the programme by offering one or more short-term fellowship(s) to staff from other member institutions (the recipients) to spend up to one month at the donor institution in order to receive training, carry out an academic exchange or undertake a collaborative research project. All member institutions are welcome to participate in this capacity-building initiative.

For interested member institutions, please forward the details of the programme to the AAOU Secretariat to disseminate your information to all member institutions. A Call for Applications template is provided for reference down below.

Please send the application to

aaou.secretariat@ouchn.edu.cn and secretariat@aaou.org.

Please download application template here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3ojSHKyJDiBMGdOMDMYwklRSTA>.

Call for Hosting the 41st AAOU Annual Conference 2028

The Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) has officially announced the opening of proposals for hosting the 41st AAOU Annual Conference 2028. This call invites **full members** to step into the global limelight and lead one of the most prestigious events in the field of open and distance learning (ODL).

The Conference is a stimulating forum for all those associated with open and distance learning (ODL) in Asia, and is a focal point for updating everyone on the issues, ideas and developments in the field of ODL in the region. It is also an international platform for the critical exchange of knowledge and expertise among ODL academics, researchers and practitioners.

Hosting the conference is more than just organizing an event; it is a strategic opportunity for institutions to shape the future of education while gaining significant international recognition:

1. Global Visibility

Showcase your institution's commitment to innovation and excellence on an international stage. Gain unparalleled exposure among educators, researchers, and policymakers from around the world.

2. Networking Goldmine

Forge valuable connections with thought leaders and influencers in the field of open and distance education. Collaborate, share insights, and explore opportunities for future partnerships.

3. Enhanced Reputation

Elevate your institution's reputation as a leader in education by demonstrating your dedication to advancing knowledge and fostering collaboration.

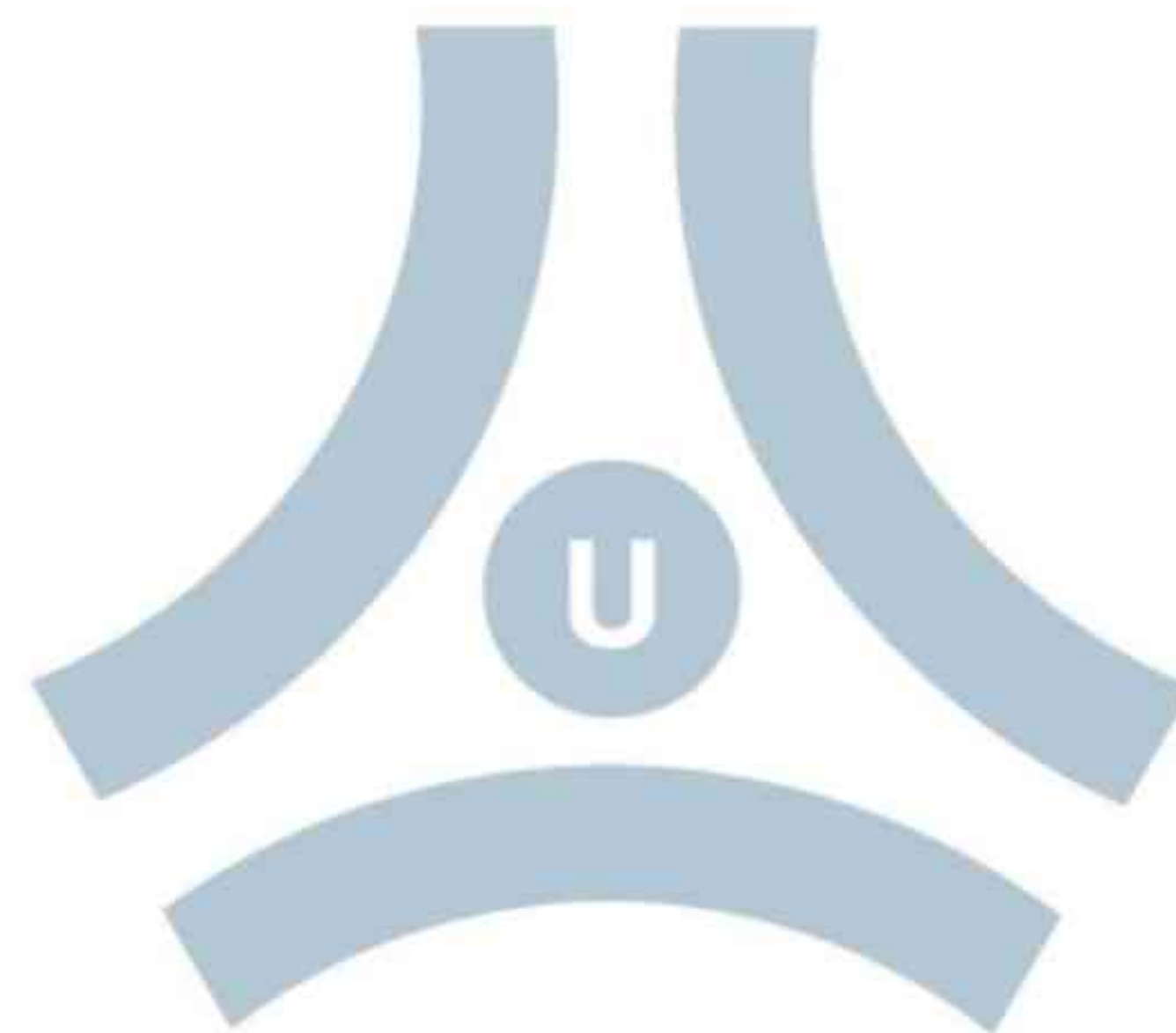
4. Knowledge Exchange

Curate a dynamic program that reflects your institution's strengths and priorities. Drive discussions, share best practices, and inspire innovation within the global educational community.

5. Valuable Experience and Memories

There is no other experience like one where you have to vigorously hassle on making big things happen. On the scale of an international conference, you will gain more experience in managing such event which requires strong leadership, communication, and partnership between your institution and the related partners.

Don't miss this opportunity to showcase your institution's commitment to education, innovation, and collaboration. If your institution is interested in hosting this important event, please submit your proposal to AAOU Secretariat at aaou.secretariat@ouchn.edu.cn and secretariat@aaou.org, by 30 June 2026.



**ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF
OPEN UNIVERSITIES**