



# PSYCHWATT Newsletter

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

## Psychology Department & Achievements

Highlighting the expertise of staff, their pioneering research and impactful achievements, shaping knowledge and inspiring future psychologists.

## Student Events & Campus Life

From social events to industrial visits, find out how you can get involved, build friendships, and make the most of every moment on campus.

## Feature Articles & Research Highlights

Thought-provoking articles and the latest psychological research exploring topics that matter to students, parents, and future professionals alike.

## Alumni & Internship Opportunities

Get inspired by alumni success stories and discover pathways to internships that can kickstart your future career. Real advice. Real impact.

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# Editorial



## **Professor Glenn Hitchman**

*Head of Psychology  
Department*

Welcome to the third edition of the PsychWatt Newsletter! As we embark on the 2025–26 academic year, it is inspiring to reflect on the remarkable growth and achievements of our Psychology Department. We're proud to share that Psychology at Heriot-Watt University now ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the Guardian University Guide 2026, the highest among providers of British Psychological Society accredited programmes in Malaysia, surpassing a number of long-established UK institutions. With each edition, we see more evidence of our thriving community of students, faculty, alumni, and partners, all working together to advance knowledge, share experiences, and make psychology meaningful in everyday life.

Reflecting on the past year, our events were defined by collaboration and creativity. Our flagship HWUM Psychology Conference 2025 once again brought together students from all academic levels, staff, alumni, and industry experts in a vibrant celebration of ideas. From insightful group presentations to innovative final-year research projects, the event showcased not only academic rigour but also the enthusiasm and curiosity that make our community unique. Similarly, at MAPSA 2025, our students stood proudly on the national stage, with Year 3 student Nasuha Irdina winning the Best Poster award for her research on media framing and prejudice, a testament to the quality and impact of student work at HWUM.

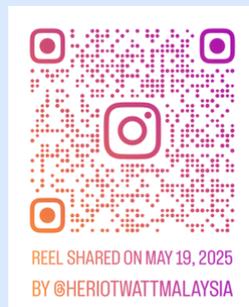
On the research front, in this edition we focus on publications involving collaborations between students and staff. Dr Kenneth Leow and Dr Joel Yap share their impactful research with two notable publications exploring conditional regard, resilience, and emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, Dr Poh shares the findings of her research on the impact of a student-led Student-Staff Liaison Committee on communication between students and staff. Together, these projects highlight how students and staff at HWUM continue to work together to shape knowledge and inform practice.

# Editorial

Equally inspiring are the stories of our students and graduates. From internships at FedEx, Electrolux, Ipsos, and Speciable Therapy Centre to alumni pursuing further studies or beginning careers in mental health, human resources, and research, their journeys highlight the many pathways an education in psychology can open. These experiences demonstrate the academic development our students experience as well as their growing confidence in applying psychology in diverse and meaningful ways.

We are also grateful for our community partners, such as the Nicol David Organisation, whose work in combining sport, education, and positive psychology has created invaluable opportunities for our students and alumni. Meanwhile, the Psychology Society has been rekindling energy on campus through events, socials, and collaborations that strengthen the bonds within and beyond our department. Together, these initiatives remind us of the power of community in shaping personal and professional growth.

We hope this edition offers you a window into the rich and dynamic life of Heriot-Watt University Malaysia's Psychology Department. For further insight, scan the QR codes below to experience a day in the life of two of our students.



Whether you are a student, alum, or friend of our community, we invite you to share in our successes, stay connected, and continue to be part of this journey with us. Enjoy reading, and we look forward to celebrating even more milestones together in the year ahead!

# Meet the Team



## **Prof Glenn Hitchman**

*Professor and Head of Department*

“My favourite psychologist is William James because he worked at a time when it was still possible to grasp the full breadth of the field of psychology, and he brought a lot of curiosity and wit to his explorations. I admire his deep interest in altered states of consciousness, especially those beyond the ordinary waking state. His playful critiques of structuralism also show his willingness to challenge rigid thinking with both insight and humour.”

It was a significant achievement to assume the role of Head of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia as a Professor. Since joining in March 2023, my focus has been twofold: nurturing a sense of community among staff, students, and our external partners, and injecting more fun, enjoyment, and engagement into our psychology provisions. To this end, I've enjoyed working closely with the Psychology Society committee to plan a vibrant calendar of activities and events for each academic year. These initiatives offer a plethora of opportunities for our community to come together, explore psychological concepts, acquire new skills, and embrace new experiences. Compared to my first day in this role, witnessing more smiles both inside and outside of the classroom, and the growing sounds of laughter, have been just as gratifying as the academic milestones achieved by our dedicated staff and students. Meanwhile, I have continued to pursue research in the controversial field of parapsychology, my specialist area of expertise, exploring the intersection between science and the unexplained.

## **Ms. Aisyah Hazrin**

*Psychology Technician*

“Carl Rogers is my favourite psychologist. At first, his notion of ‘unconditional positive regard’ sounded too idealistic to be useful, but watching him apply it in his therapy sessions (some are on YouTube!) changed my mind. It takes real strength to believe people deserve that kind of acceptance and to offer it so consistently that they feel safe enough to grow. He’s cool.”



Since joining the Psychology team at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM) in November 2024, I've been warmly welcomed and already had the chance to be part of some meaningful experiences. I've celebrated student achievements at events like the HWUM Psychology Conference and the Malaysian Psychology Students Assembly (MAPSA) 2025. I also had the opportunity to lead a visit with staff and students to a company specialising in behavioural equipment, where we explored how eye-tracking technology is applied across various business contexts. Looking ahead, I'm excited to help organise more visits to industry experts to give students a closer look at how psychology is applied in real-world settings. One of HWUM's greatest strengths is its close-knit, supportive community. I aim to contribute to that spirit by being a positive and approachable presence for our students. I also look forward to seeing the Psychology programmes grow through interdisciplinary collaborations with fields like Robotics, Engineering, and the Business School.

# Meet the Team



## **Dr Joel Yap**

*Assistant Professor, School Studies Committee Member*

“Identifying a favourite psychologist is a difficult choice, but if I had to pick just one, I’d choose Abraham Maslow. His difficult childhood shaped his deep interest in understanding human motivation and potential. Despite facing emotional neglect and hardship, he chose to study what makes life meaningful and fulfilling, which led to his development of the Hierarchy of Needs. His focus on self-actualisation continues to inspire me to look beyond challenges and strive for growth.”

Educator by passion, researcher by curiosity, and impact coach by happy accident. I’m Dr Joel Yap Chia Keat, a Chartered Member and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS), and a Senior Fellow of Advance HE, with over 13 years of teaching experience in higher education. I believe everyone is unique with their own set of quirks, strengths, and potential waiting to be discovered. My mission? To help students and individuals turn stress into growth and build on what makes them truly shine. With a strong background in psychology, I’ve developed psychology labs at universities, chaired conferences, and won awards for mentoring (i.e., Best Impact Coach 2024). Success isn’t one-size-fits-all; it’s about discovering what makes you thrive.

## **Dr Kenneth Leow**

*Assistant Professor, PhD Programme Director*

“My favourite psychologist is Professor Richard Ryan - Co-Developer of Self-Determination Theory and Centre for Self-Determination Theory. Rich is also among some of the most cited researchers in psychology and social sciences today, having authored over 400 papers and books in the areas of human motivation, personality, and psychological wellbeing. Fun fact: he was also my Professor during my doctoral studies at the University of Rochester. Rich has a great sense of humour, and always strives to make his classes and workshops engaging and full of laughter.”



I joined Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM) in January 2023. Since joining the Psychology Department, I have submitted 7 academic papers to peer-reviewed journals, of which 4 papers to date have been successfully accepted for publication. I’m delighted to have taken the opportunity to collaborate with fellow HWUM colleagues and undergraduate students in some of my research projects. Publications aside, I have also engaged with China Press for an interview on the topic of suicide and mental health in Malaysia.

Furthermore, I have contributed 2 public engagement articles related to higher education in Malaysia for the New Straits Times. In April, I was invited by the Future Cities Research Institute to present my research on rejuvenating spaces and eudaimonic wellbeing. More recently, I have successfully presented a research paper on technostress in higher education at the Improving University Teaching conference which was held at HWUM in July.

# Meet the Team



**Dr Ke Guek Nee**

*Associate Professor, Associate Director of Research*

“My favourite psychologist is Prof Philip Zimbardo, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the American Psychological Association Conference in 2018. Prof Zimbardo is best known for his groundbreaking Stanford Prison Experiment and HERO Project. We shared a meaningful exchange on our mutual interests in applied psychology and social behaviour.”

My professional journey with Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM) began in 2014. I currently serve as the Director of the HWU Coaching Lab, Associate Director of Research (ADoR) for the School of Social Sciences (SoSS) Malaysia, and as a member of the Research Management Committee (RMC). Driven by a strong passion for research, I have successfully secured national and international funding from a diverse range of sources, including industry partners, government agencies, and academic institutions. As of 2025, my research activities have contributed over RMI million in research income to HWUM. Throughout my career, I have been regularly invited to speak at international conferences and congresses, both as a keynote and invited speaker. Beyond academia, I contribute professionally as an Accreditation Panel Member for the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). Additionally, I am also proud to be a Chartered Member and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS), and a Master Practitioner with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), UK.



**Dr Mandy S.C. Wong**

*Assistant Professor, Postgraduate Programme Director*

“My favourite psychologist is Fred Luthans, known for developing the concept of Psychological Capital. I am impressed by his view that while personality cannot be changed, self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience can be developed to drive personal and organisational growth.”

*“I am a river to nourish and nurture life. My purpose is to inspire and encourage others to lead a meaningful life. I strive to influence others to achieve wellbeing and live a purposeful life through activities that lead them to acquire life experiences.”* I am coordinating and delivering undergraduate and postgraduate psychology courses with colleagues in the UK, Dubai and Malaysia. I am also the global course leader of one of the undergraduate Research Methods courses. In addition, I am Postgraduate Psychology Programme Director.

In this role, I ensure students successfully complete their studies and oversee the smooth delivery of the courses. I was a committee member of the Responsive Blended Learning action group during the pandemic, working closely and actively with the marketing and academic quality teams as well as staff in student admissions and student recruitment. Furthermore, I supported the achievement of the successful accreditation of our undergraduate programmes from both the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and the British Psychological Society. I am also an external examiner for a private education institution.

# Meet the Team

## Dr Poh Wei Lin

*Assistant Professor, Year 1 Coordinator*

I teach across all 3 years, including Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Health Psychology, Neuropsychology and Cognitive Rehabilitation. I also teach a statistics course on the Business and Finance programme. I like to share tips with final year students on how to write the introduction section of their dissertation project without anxiety. There is no scientific basis to my tips; they are based on my personal experiences and my PhD supervisors' advice.



One of my favourite quotes from Ted Chiang (author of *Stories of Your Life*) is...

"...Within the context of simultaneous consciousness, freedom is not meaningful, but neither is coercion; it's simply a different context, no more or less valid than the other. It's like that famous optical illusion, the drawing of either an elegant young woman, face turned away from the viewer, or a wart-nosed crone, chin tucked down on her chest. There's no "correct" interpretation; both are equally valid. But you can't see both at the same time."

He uses Gestalt principles (in Cognitive Psychology) to eloquently describe consciousness and the outcomes of the choices we make.

"My favourite psychologist is Marcia K. Johnson due to her work on cognition and memory. Other favourite psychologists are my (awesome) current dissertation students that I supervise this year because of their bravery to learn and apply their knowledge in psychology and test their ideas:

Jung Ren and Jackson – use of emojis in communication,

Edyqa – office spaces and wellbeing,

Henry – work organisation,

Yelil – superstitious and paranormal beliefs in affecting behaviour.

Some of them share their conference and internship experience in this newsletter. Go read them!"

## Dr Ron Salden

*Associate Professor, Undergraduate Programme Director*

Once upon a time when I was a postdoctoral researcher, I won the Cognition and Student Learning Prize at the 2008 Cognitive Science conference. During the summer of 2019, I chaperoned several UG students who presented their Final Year Project (FYP) at a Psychology conference in Penang. Throughout my time at HWUM I have frequently offered extracurricular workshops to engage students in relevant research skills that benefit their FYP and employability.



Also, I have contributed significantly to the preparation and visit of our successful BPS accreditation in February 2023. Furthermore, my impact statement has been put into practice with field trips to Diveheart Malaysia, a nonprofit volunteer-driven organisation whose mission is to build confidence, independence and self-esteem in children, veterans and others with disabilities using adaptive scuba diving and scuba therapy. Additionally, on 1 March 2023 we hosted the signing of an impactful Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen our collaboration with Diveheart. I aim to have staff and students become volunteers to join me in making positive contributions for the disabled community in Malaysia.

# Research



Dr Kenneth Leow



Dr Joel Yap

In collaboration with their psychology colleagues and students, Dr Kenneth and Dr Joel have published two notable papers: ‘“Do as I say”. The impact of perceived conditional regard on academic performance: a moderated mediation model’ and ‘Resilience as a mediator between emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived stress among young adults in Malaysia.’

The first paper investigates the use of conditional regard (offering acceptance for desired behaviours but withholding affection when expectations are unmet) in teacher-student relationships and its association with feelings of resentment from a cross-cultural perspective. Using a sample of university students from different cultural backgrounds, the findings suggest that perceived conditional regard significantly predicts student resentment toward teachers, which in turn negatively impacts academic performance. Surprisingly, no cultural differences were found in how conditional regard is experienced, suggesting its emotional impact is universal. In summary, conditional regard is a harmful practice for students' academic performance. Teachers should adopt autonomy-supportive practices rather than controlling approaches.

The second paper, where the first author is a Heriot-Watt student, explores whether resilience mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived stress among undergraduate students in Malaysia. The study found that female students perceived higher stress compared to male students. The results also showed that EI negatively predicted perceived stress but positively predicted resilience. Most importantly, resilience was found to fully mediate the relationship between EI and perceived stress. These findings suggest that both resilience and EI are important factors that can reduce stress levels and improve wellbeing among university students.

COGENT SOCIAL SCIENCES  
2025, VOL. 11, NO. 1, 2474862  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2474862>



SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS



“Do as I say”. The impact of perceived conditional regard on academic performance: a moderated mediation model

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Discover Mental Health

Research

Resilience as a mediator between emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived stress among young adults in Malaysia

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Received: 5 February 2024 / Accepted: 10 March 2025

Published online: 20 March 2025

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# Research



Dr Poh Wei Lin

**Developing and listening to students' voice through (re)building Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC)**

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School of Social Sciences

**Introduction:**  
SSLC allows for students and staff representatives to meet and discuss matters pertaining to learning and teaching in an open and respectful manner. Although there are key principles to govern this process, there are many challenges that demand SSLC representatives from achieving a meaningful discussion and resolution of issues.

In 2024/2025 Academic Year, in response to a new school policy, we transitioned from a staff-led to student-led SSLC meeting. This project reflects on a collaborative effort in making this shift, identifies contextual (e.g., Malaysian) nuances that affect the process and outcomes of this shift as well as areas for improvement. A focus group discussion highlights factors promoting student engagement and motivation to further enhance and sustain a student-led SSLC.

**Literature Review:**  
• Reported (2020) highlighted that student centred feedback, such as use of questionnaires, limits effective staff-student communication.  
• To understand students' learning experience, Graham (2012) reported that staff should be "active" rather than "reactive" when communicating in a way that they would be listened to. Connecting to people rather than seeing a person filing a note enhances the effectiveness of the staff-student relationship.  
• Examples of student-staff partnerships, including co-designing teaching activities, co-creating work sheets and resources (Dewitt, 2019). Studies reported this authentic general positive outcomes such as enhanced engagement, enhanced a sense of belonging (Clark-Sutton, Boud and Koppo, 2014; van et al., 2016; Meyer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

**Objectives:**  
The aim of building a student led SSLC are:  
• To include student voice through conducting a series of surveys in students.  
• To enhance their communication and leadership skills as student representatives learn to articulate their feedback.  
• To facilitate a sense of shared and community among students and staff.

**This poster highlights:**  
• Processes and challenges of this transition  
• Focus group discussion at the end project to reflect on a student-led SSLC.

**Student-led SSLC strategy:**  
• **Challenges:** Lack of structure to support students, understanding cultural context and minimal student engagement  
• **Support provided:**  
• Introduced discipline specific SSLC, smaller setting to facilitate discussion  
• Supporting School Officer (SSO)  
• Understanding their roles within the context of SSLC  
• Open communication – serve as contact point to reflect throughout the process of implementing the new SSLC process  
• **Support provided:**  
• Building a sense of community with OUs  
• Clearing training sessions, informal and individual catch-ups  
• Preparing for SSLC  
• What did you like about your course?  
• What are some critical aspects of the course?  
• Propose a solution (to be discussed with staff)  
• Chaired SSLC and closed feedback loop with OUs

**Findings and key takeaways:**  
**Theme 1: Peer-led environment**  
• Felted way for comfortable, supportive, and communicative environment  
• Increased openness and reliability  
• Encouraged active participation  
**Theme 2: Student leadership and development**  
• No sharing and monitoring SSLC  
• Key attributes and availability of SSO support OUs  
**Theme 3: Reducing barriers to student engagement**  
• Understanding hierarchical dynamics and unclear feedback expectations that limits responsiveness  
• Addressing cultural context to understand its intended improvements in a student-led model  
**Theme 4: Good practice to promote student engagement**  
• Support and mechanisms are essential to sustain effective participation  
• Strengthening feedback loops, ensuring visible action on student input, building trust, and fostering informal connections with staff

**Focus group methods & mind map:**  
• Focus group following a semi-structured interview guide with follow up questions. Qualitative Thematic Analysis (TA) of the data was conducted following the six-step approach outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). The TA aims to answer the research question – "What is the impact of a student-led Student-Staff Liaison Committee based?"  
• In 4 OUs represented both staff led and student led SSLC

**What do students think?**  
"I enjoyed the way that it was led this year as I got with a student officer being there, even just that, it made a difference for us with him being in class with us..."  
"...since the student officer is my classmate. So, it was comfortable, when someone you know is leading the SSLC, has shared the same experience as you. So, we felt more relaxed... our feedback is easier to explain."  
"I think the outcome between the two policy is the same, but the process is very different, there's a middle person [peer] telling us what to do... [peer] less subordinate"  
"... more willing to talk more and if SSLC has a friendlier tone."



Arslan Hojanazarov

Working with her student, Arslan Hojanazarov, Dr Poh presented a poster at the Annual Global Conference for University Teaching, held in London, United Kingdom. The presentation covered a study on the impact of a student-led Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) on the communication between students and staff.

In the 2024/25 academic year, the historically staff-led SSLC transitioned to being student-led. This gave us an opportunity to investigate the difference between these two approaches and how it benefits students. A focus group discussion with four class representatives was held to gather feedback about the transition. Using thematic analysis, four main themes were identified: peer-led environment, student leadership and development, reducing barriers to student engagement and good practice to enhance student engagement. One student commented "...the student officer is my classmate. So, it was comfortable, when someone you know is leading the SSLC, has shared the same experience as you. So, we felt more relaxed... our feedback is easier to explain." In summary, this transition allowed students to feel more comfortable to express their opinions and promoted student engagement with staff.

Dr Poh also published a notable paper: "What is the scope of refreshing? Downstream effects of reflective attention do not extend to semantically linked items" This study investigated whether focusing attention on a word in your mind (called "refreshing") affects related words too. She tested bilingual speakers with word translations and English speakers with similar-meaning words (such as "dog" and "cat"). She found that while mentally focusing on a word clearly affected how people later processed the same word, it had no impact on the processing of translations or semantically related words. This suggests that when we consciously direct our attention to words in memory, our brain works at a relatively shallow level, which is focusing on how words look, sound, or feel rather than their deeper meanings and connections to other concepts.

# Student Stories

## Internships



**Nadia Humaira**  
*Electrolux Sdn Bhd*

From May to July 2025, I interned with Electrolux in the People Services & Solutions (HR) department. Over the course of three months, I supported HR operations across several regions, including Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, the UAE, Morocco, and occasionally Malaysia. It was a fast-paced and high-volume environment, which gave me hands-on exposure to regional HR processes and systems. My role involved working on service tickets, updating internal records, and coordinating with various teams to ensure timely and accurate support for employees. I also had the chance to familiarise myself with ServiceNow, and gained valuable experience navigating corporate HR workflows in a multinational setting. This internship sharpened my communication, time management, and problem-solving skills, while giving me valuable insights into how large organisations manage employee services globally. Despite some challenges, I appreciated the learning experience and the chance to contribute meaningfully. It also inspired me to further explore HR and be more mindful of the work culture and leadership I want to grow under.

FedEx wasn't my first choice, but it turned out to be a beautiful accident - one that shaped my personal and professional growth in ways I didn't expect. Learn, work, experience - these are words often associated with internships, but for me, this journey became about more than building a résumé. It was about finding purpose, aligning my values with my vision of success, and discovering what truly motivates me for the future. I joined the IGNITE Internship Programme as the very first intern, stepping into Human Resources and People Operations. My role revolved around supporting people: managing employee data, contributing to behavioural initiatives, and assisting with team-building projects. It was a unique chance to bring fresh perspectives into the corporate world while learning directly from seasoned professionals. A highlight of my internship was helping to deliver the IGNITE orientation programme alongside my mentor, Jin Ju Oon, who led the initiative regionally across Asia Pacific. From preparing welcome kits and creating interactive Mentimeter games, to joining career fairs and gathering feedback, every detail showed me the impact of thoughtful planning. This experience pushed me to step out of my comfort zone, speak up, and grow. It reaffirmed my passion for people management and strengthened my dream of one day leading a team with empathy and purpose.



**Hani Sofia Hanaffi**  
*FedEx Kuala Lumpur*

# Student Stories

## Internship

My internship at Speciable Therapy Centre was both challenging and deeply rewarding. Working with children aged 2 to 11 with diverse needs such as ADHD, Down syndrome, and autism has given me valuable insights into their unique strengths, personalities, and ways of learning.

One of the most exciting aspects of my role was the opportunity to conduct my own class every three weeks. On those days, I had to create a lesson plan, prepare teaching materials, and take the lead as the main teacher. This freedom allowed me to be creative and tailor activities to suit each child's level of functioning. I had the chance to put into practice some of the approaches I learned about in class, especially ways to encourage positive behaviour and keep children engaged. These strategies helped to create a more supportive and enjoyable learning environment for everyone in the class.

One heartwarming highlight was a child who would greet me with open arms every time he saw me - his way of asking for a hug. Carrying him around the classroom became a cherished routine.

During Sports Day, I was part of the setup crew. I helped decorate the play area, arrange the race lanes, and prepare the field for activities. I also guided the children and parents throughout the event, which made the day lively and memorable for everyone.

I am grateful to the warm and supportive colleagues (Teacher Sin Yee, Teacher Soo Meng, Teacher Aina, Teacher Anum, Teacher Syida, Teacher Mimie, Teacher Anis and Teacher Syahirah) who guided me throughout this journey. This internship has been a meaningful chapter in my development, allowing me to grow both personally and professionally while creating memories I will always cherish.



**Jackson Lam**  
*Speciable Therapy  
Center*



# Student Stories

## Internships



**Edyqa Sukral Helmi**  
*Ipsos Sdn Bhd*

As a research intern at a market research company, Ipsos, I experienced firsthand the work that researchers do to make sense of the world based on the parameters being set by each client. The work of researchers has been something I have always admired, and while there were some challenges along the way, I found my experience working here in a support role to be very rewarding.

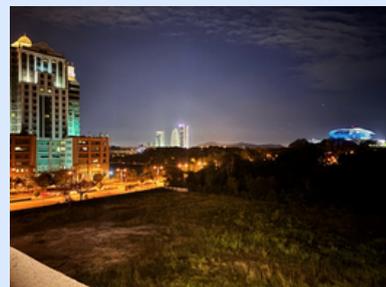
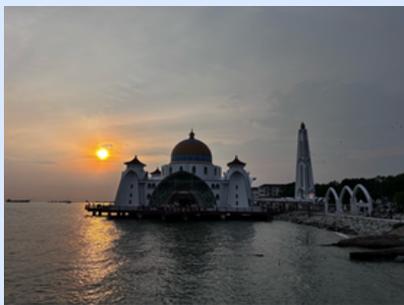
The department I worked in specialises in qualitative research, meaning that I had to deal with data pertaining to the perceptions of people collected through focus groups. While I would say that collecting and processing this data is not easy, the lessons in qualitative research that I learned in class made the process of dealing with this type of data much less daunting to me because I knew what to expect. For example, identifying a theme that is hidden within spoken words in the form of a transcript can be difficult, but it is a challenge that I enjoyed working through in the name of finding a greater insight.

My usual tasks tended to be in support of research projects with specific parameters depending on the client. Being fluent in English, Malay and Mandarin was a major help for my department as I was able to translate text and spoken words to and from 3 different languages, which is great when it comes to researching vernacular groups, and it is especially crucial when understanding a multicultural country like Malaysia. From data analysis to data collection to translation work, I was given a broad range of tasks that reflect what is required in a professional research environment.

For those who want to get their hands dirty in the world of research and are interested in working to support research, I would recommend interning at Ipsos. It was a great opportunity to intern here and be able to sharpen my research skills within a supportive environment.

# Student Stories

## Go Global



Ben

*Bsc Psychology Year 2*

Up to and including the present, my time in Malaysia has been thoroughly amicable and enlightening. From the airport to the university campus, I have been met with humility, generosity, and a swelteringly humid climate, regularly juxtaposed by alarmingly frigid air conditioning.

During my weekends I have travelled to the extremities of Malaysia; including Penang, Melaka, Perhentian Islands, and of course Kuala Lumpur - experiences that have both contrasted and complimented the cultural differences of the Edinburgh campus. The country has been nothing short of inspiring, with cultural spectacles such as the Melaka Straits Mosque, peppered amongst bustling street markets ornate with potent smells, tantalising food, and stimulating colours.

My educational experience has been equally pleasant. The linear campus has aided my non-existent sense of direction; thus, my attendance has been uncharacteristically high! The lecturers and university staff have upholstered every aspect of my transition and have provided helpful, and supportive information for aspects of both study and residence in the country. My classmates have been endlessly helpful, and have been friendly, welcoming and inspire a communal feeling to the academic hours.

I have joined and partaken in the rugby team, who have provided another entertaining aspect to my studies, with weekly training sessions and meals providing sporting and social activities to fill out my schedule.

I would thoroughly recommend the experience to anyone who would be interested, or anyone curious about it.

# Community Partners

## Nicol David Organisation



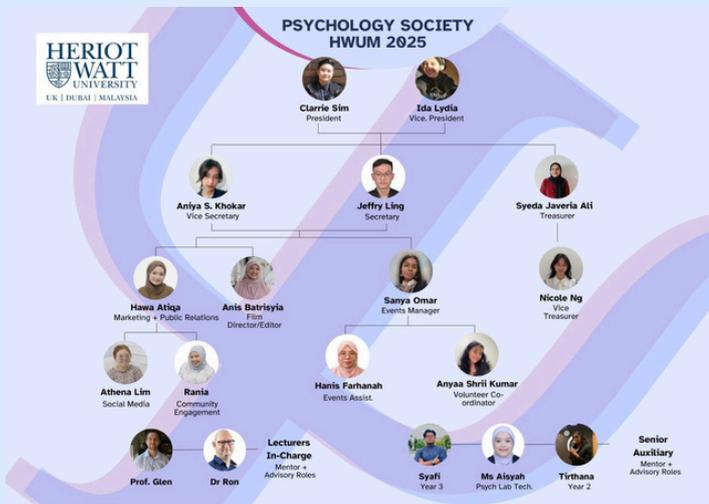
Nicol David Organisation (NDO), located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, is making a big difference in the lives of children through a unique combination of sport and education. NDO is founded by Datuk Nicol David, former Malaysian professional squash player, and visionary Mariana de Reyes. They are dedicated to empowering children from low-income families through its flagship programme, “Little Legends.”

The "Little Legends" programme provides an excellent after-school experience. It combines high-quality squash training, English tutoring, life skills courses, and a nutritional plan, all of which are subsidised for low-income families. A major addition is the positive psychology module, which focuses on teaching life skills such as gratitude, happiness, and character traits. By mixing concepts like learnt optimism into engaging activities, the programme provides children with psychological tools to overcome obstacles and build resilience, in line with developmental psychology principles.

NDO has been an invaluable partner for Heriot-Watt University Malaysia students, providing chances for research, teaching and coaching internships, as well as full-time graduate employment. Students from Heriot-Watt University Malaysia have conducted child psychology research at NDO, applying the organisation's focus on positive and developmental psychology. This relationship promotes academic exploration and professional development.

Datuk Nicol David has been named as Heriot-Watt Pro-Chancellor Malaysia. Furthermore, the institution honoured her extraordinary achievements in 2022 by awarding her an Honorary Degree for her contributions to sport and support for empowering people through education.

# HWUM Psychology Society



Hello, my friend. Thanks for making it this far through our newsletter. You are officially at the halfway point! We hope you are enjoying the read and are excited to discover what is coming next.

We, the HWUM Psychology Society, are on a mission this year: to bring back the vibrant energy and connections that make our community special. We want to recreate the joy and happiness experienced when we gather for parties or events. So, we hope to see you at the events coming up in the weeks and months ahead. We promise they will create lasting memories and meaningful connections.

None of this would be possible without our incredible team. These dedicated individuals pour their hearts into making each event special, and we are grateful for their passion and creativity. We also want to thank staff in the Psychology Department for their support. The lecturers, faculty members, and students have shown their support both during events and planning stages. As the saying goes, “teamwork makes the dream work,” and this great relationship is what makes our society into a truly meaningful community.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to become part of our psychology family. Keep an eye on our upcoming events. We promise they will be worth your time and energy. Until then, drink more water and have a good day!

Follow us on  
Instagram: [@psychsoc\\_hwum](https://www.instagram.com/psychsoc_hwum)  
Tik Tok: [@psychsoc\\_hwum](https://www.tiktok.com/@psychsoc_hwum)



# Alumni Insights



**Natalie Franklin**  
*BSc Psychology Graduate,  
Class of 2025*

Hey there! I'm Natalie, and I recently graduated with a degree in Psychology with Management. Honestly, choosing this course was a no-brainer for me. I've always been absolutely fascinated by the human mind and how it shapes everything we do. So naturally, choosing Heriot-Watt University Malaysia for this journey was a great decision because this course offers a perfect blend of psychological depth and practical business acumen. Throughout my three years, I learned to critically analyse situations, conduct research, and apply psychological principles to real-world scenarios. And a huge shout-out to the lecturers - they were simply amazing! So approachable, supportive, and they made every single class engaging. Ultimately, this programme didn't just give me a degree; it really sharpened my interpersonal and business skills, setting me up perfectly for my future endeavours!



**Sarah Elynna**  
*BSc Psychology Graduate,  
Class of 2025*

Studying at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic journey. What I love most is the strong sense of community and support from both faculty and peers. The campus fosters a challenging yet nurturing learning environment, with knowledgeable lecturers genuinely invested in students' growth. I've engaged in meaningful discussions, participated in insightful workshops, and built lasting friendships with people from diverse backgrounds.

I appreciate Malaysia's multiculturalism. Its unique blend of cultures, languages, and traditions makes everyday life interesting and vibrant. The country's warm hospitality, delicious food, and affordability influenced my decision to study here.

I pursued Psychology because I'm passionate about understanding human behaviour and helping others. Heriot-Watt University's Psychology programme attracted me with its British curriculum, emphasis on research, and opportunity to gain a world-class education locally - perfect for my mental health career aspiration.

The university's excellent support for new students made settling down relatively easy. I would like to sincerely thank Dr Joel for being such a supportive and understanding personal tutor. Your guidance, kindness, encouragement, and genuine care have made a meaningful difference in my academic and personal journey.

# Alumni Insights



**Ng Xin En**  
*Cohort 2023/2024*

First of all, I'm honoured to be featured in this edition of our Psychology Newsletter and grateful to be looped into the recent conference opportunity in Singapore. I'm especially thankful for the guidance and mentorship of my supervisor, Dr Joel Yap Chia Keat, who has been instrumental in shaping my research direction. Dr Joel also gave me the chance to connect with researchers across Southeast Asia, share insights, and present my conceptual review - a highlight that reflects my deep interest in developmental and educational psychology. I truly appreciate this as it has not only widened my academic exposure but also given me the confidence to grow as an early-career researcher.

Other than that, I'm currently pursuing a Master's leading to a PhD in Psychology at the University of Nottingham Malaysia. My research on parenting styles, coping strategies, and academic stress was inspired by personal experiences, particularly seeing how academic stress impacted my younger cousins and the different parenting approaches within my own family, especially from my aunt. These real-life observations motivated me to explore how early family environments shape students' ability to cope with stress.



**Irdina Huda**  
*Cohort 2023/2024*

Hello everyone, I'm Irdina, one of Dr Joel's supervisees. I've always dreamt of publishing an article, and Alhamdulillah, I was able to achieve that goal with Dr Joel's help.

I'm also deeply grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering support and for constantly encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone. Words can't fully express how thankful I am for their presence in my life.

Having gone through my own share of challenges, I was inspired to explore which coping strategies best predicted resilience. This became the central aim of my research. By understanding this connection, we can work towards developing more effective ways to manage stress and, ultimately, provide better support to those in need, especially in today's increasingly demanding world.

With that, thank you once again, and please remember to care for your mental health. Take care everyone!

# Achievements

## Heriot-Watt University Coaching Lab

The Coaching Lab achieved several key milestones during the 2024–2025 academic year. Highlighted below are a significant award and a notable event.

### WINNER! Coaching Psychology Team Shines with Global Teaching Award 2024

The Coaching Psychology Team and Coaching Lab Team won the Pioneering in Education Global Teaching Team Award 2024. The Coaching Lab implemented six initiatives aimed at contributing towards a globally connected University as well as building a flourishing university community at Heriot-Watt. This effort continues to benefit our students and staff across all campuses.

Dr Ke Guek Nee, Director of the Coaching Lab received the award from Ms Janice Yew, Chief Operating Officer of Heriot-Watt University Malaysia. Coaching Lab members include Dr Dasha Grajfoner, Dr Lucy Bolton, Emma Smail, Claire Khalifa and Benita Maben.

### Futureproofing Coaching: Critical Conversations on Emerging Trends 2025

On 22 May 2025, the HWU Coaching Lab successfully hosted a high-impact online forum titled “Futureproofing Coaching: Critical Conversations on Emerging Trends”. The event brought together a distinguished panel of global and regional coaching leaders and was attended by members of the global coaching community. Featured panelists included Mikko Sorvari (President, EMCC Global); Ivan Yong (President, EMCC Asia Pacific); Martin Taylor (Head, Professional and Organisational Development, Heriot-Watt University) and Dr Ke Guek Nee (Director, HWU Coaching Lab) served as moderator.

The panel explored emerging trends shaping the future of coaching, including digital transformation, ethical considerations around AI, cultural intelligence, and the evolving role of coaching in education and organisational development. Discussions emphasised the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and sustained global collaboration to ensure coaching remains impactful in a rapidly changing world. The forum concluded with a shared commitment to advancing the coaching profession through continued dialogue, innovation, and cross-border partnerships.



**Futureproofing Coaching: Critical Conversations on Emerging Trends**  
(An Online Panel Discussion Featuring Industry Experts)

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY  
UK | DUBAI | MALAYSIA

Thursday – May 22, 2025  
8:00-9:00 AM (EST) | 1:00-2:00 PM (UK)  
4:00-5:00 PM (Dubai) | 8:00-9:00 PM (Malaysia)

EMCC GLOBAL

 <b>Dr. Ke Guek Nee</b> Director - Coaching Lab Heriot-Watt University	 <b>Martin Taylor</b> Head - Professional & Organisational Development Heriot-Watt University	 <b>Mikko Sorvari</b> President EMCC Global	 <b>Ivan Yong</b> Co-President EMCC Asia Pacific
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# Achievements

## Student Voice Award



Prof Glenn Hitchman was recently honoured with the Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Student Association (HWUMSA) Oscar Award for Student Voice. This award recognises individuals or groups of staff who actively seek and use student feedback to enhance the student experience. Winning this award is particularly meaningful because it reflects the ethos of the Psychology Department in working in genuine partnership with our students. The department places great emphasis on listening to student perspectives and involving them in shaping how we teach, support students, and build our community. Whether through course feedback, student representatives, or informal conversations, student voices guide our decisions and inspire innovations in the learning environment. Receiving this recognition from our own students is both humbling and motivating. We are proud of the collaborative spirit within our department and will continue working alongside students to make their time at Heriot-Watt truly rewarding and memorable.

# Events

## HWUM Psychology Conference 2025



*Pictures from the event, from the left : Winners from each category, Opening words from Dr Kenneth and a group picture of the Year 1 students.*

In April this year, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia hosted the second iteration of the HWUM Psychology Conference at their campus in Putrajaya. The event brought together invited speakers, students, alumni, industry professionals, and friends of the department, all united by a shared passion for psychology and the exchange of ideas.

The day began with a light breakfast as participants gathered for registration, setting a welcoming atmosphere for the event. Following this, Prof Glenn Hitchman, Head of the Department of Psychology, delivered the opening address, highlighting the importance of collaboration, curiosity, and knowledge-sharing within the discipline. The conference commenced with group presentations by Year 1 students, who impressed the audience with their insights and enthusiasm. Their presentations were evaluated by a distinguished panel of judges drawn from various professional backgrounds, offering valuable perspectives and feedback.

In the afternoon, Year 2 students presented their individual research posters, showcasing proposals for their upcoming theses. This session provided a platform for constructive discussions and reflections, allowing students to refine their ideas in preparation for their upcoming final year research projects. The final session featured the Year 3 students, who presented the results and findings of their completed theses. Their work was evaluated by a panel consisting of HWUM lecturers and external professionals.

The conference concluded with a closing ceremony, where awards were presented to the best presenters and runners-up from each academic year, recognising their hard work and dedication. The HWUM Psychology Conference once again proved to be a meaningful platform for learning, networking, and celebrating the achievements of the department's students. Memories were made, research was presented, and knowledge was exchanged.

# Events

## HWUM Psychology Conference 2025 Winner

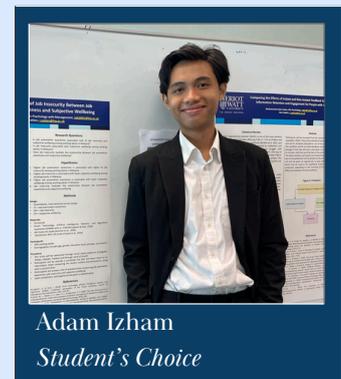


Iris Sumayyah  
*Best Presenter*

“What’s the point if there is no meaning to all of this?”

I noticed my peers (and myself included), constantly engaging in this vicious cycle of consuming such an abundance of negative news online, almost as if there is no end in sight. With every crisis that is unfolding and every mile scrolled further with our thumbs, I often heard concerns regarding whether we were even going to make it and whether there was even a degree to work towards. What began as a casual observation turned into something deeper for me: how does this compulsive behaviour reshape an individual’s apprehension of life’s uncertainty? What could then be its implications on a student’s academic motivation in this media-saturated world? Gratefully, my Final Year Project provided the perfect avenue for me to explore this curiosity. It was such an honour to receive the Best Poster Presentation Award for a project sparked by a simple reflection. I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support of our dedicated lecturers, who continually equip us with the theoretical and technical knowledge and tools integral in propelling us forward. Most importantly, the guidance and encouragement from my supervisor, Dr Joel, is undeniably the backbone to this journey thus far. I look forward to further developing my research topic, and what’s to come.

For my poster, “Mediating Effect of Job Insecurity Between Job Automation Awareness and Subjective Wellbeing”, I wanted to dive into something that’s becoming more and more real for all of us - how AI and automation might affect our jobs and, in turn, our wellbeing. I’ve always been curious about the human side of technological change, and I realised there hasn’t been much research on this in Malaysia. That’s what pushed me to explore it. When I started working on the poster, I spent a lot of time reading studies about job automation, job insecurity, and wellbeing. Most of what I found focused on the direct effects, like “automation awareness makes people insecure” or “insecurity lowers wellbeing.” But I noticed not many studies looked at how insecurity might act as a bridge between the two. That gap became the heart of my research idea. I used theories like the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping and the Conservation of Resources theory to shape my framework. I tried to keep the visuals clear and straightforward so anyone could follow the ideas quickly. Honestly, making this poster was a mix of research and personal curiosity. It’s about technology, but it’s really about people and how we cope with change.

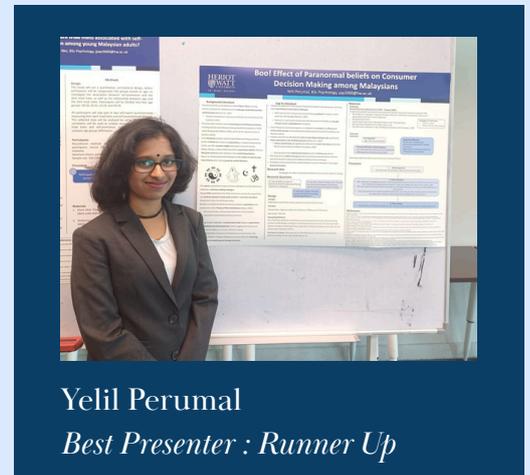


Adam Izham  
*Student’s Choice*

# Events

## HWUM Psychology Conference 2025 Winners

I presented my research proposal "Boo! The Effect of Paranormal Beliefs on Consumer Decision-Making Among Malaysians" at the HWUM Psychology Conference 2025. I was drawn to the niche of paranormal beliefs and looking at prior research in Malaysia showed the unique role paranormal beliefs play for Malaysians in their purchasing behaviour for property. Using this idea, I developed a poster outlining a qualitative approach to explore how these beliefs influence purchasing behaviour in general. It was exciting to share a topic that was unfamiliar to many but sparked a lot of interest. I received valuable feedback from the judges, my peers, and seniors. And even just answering questions from everyone allowed me to think about my project from perspectives I hadn't considered. It was a great experience, and I'm looking forward to the next conference to share with everyone how the project has evolved.



Yelil Perumal  
*Best Presenter : Runner Up*

Our team took home the Best Group Presentation Award with our research titled “*Malaysian University Students’ Perception of Dating & Its Impact on Psychological Wellbeing: A Qualitative Study*”. Through our research, we definitely discovered some intriguing themes. **One standout finding?** We found that many students attributed the responsibility for managing relationship dynamics to the female partner, regardless of their own gender. We suspect this perception is due to the belief that women possess a greater “relational capacity” than men do. However, our win wasn’t solely about the research. The real plot twist happened behind the scenes when we hit a rough patch in our group. Ironically, due to issues in our **own love lives**. We only managed to resolve the conflict moments before the winners were announced. So, you can imagine how dramatic the victory was; basically straight out of a youth sitcom. Overall, it was an unforgettable experience and we’re very grateful for the opportunity given and those that are about to come!



Year 1 Winners for Best Group Presentation  
*From the left: Hanis, Lydia and Nicole*

# Events

## SDS Associates Visit



The Psychology Department organised a visit to SDS Associates on 16 May along with members of staff and Year 1 and 2 students. If you don't know what SDS Associates is, worry not! They are a company that specialise in behavioural science, specifically eye-tracking equipment, and they work with both industry partners and universities. They boast a wide variety of clientele, from the WHO to multinational corporations, and are certified professionals in the field of eye-trackers.

When the HWUM delegates reached their office, they were given the opportunity to try out the various eye-trackers that the company has in its inventory as well as explanations on how the devices work, the history behind them and the ubiquitous use of eye-trackers in both science and business around the world. The group, especially the lecturers and students, gained valuable knowledge about how the use of such devices could help in the realm of Psychology whether to test out a theory or carry out research that dives deep into focus-related behaviours, such as visual attention, cognitive load, or even emotional processing.



# Events

## MAPSA 2025



This year's Malaysian Psychology Students Assembly (MAPSA) was hosted by the University of Cyberjaya. MAPSA is an annual academic conference that brings together psychology students from both undergraduate and postgraduate levels across Malaysia. The event is primarily organised by psychology departments and faculties from various private universities, especially those located within the Klang Valley.

From our side, several members of the teaching staff attended the conference together with students from all three years of our Psychology programmes. It was an enriching experience for everyone, as students were able to network with peers from other institutions, attend insightful sessions, and gain exposure to the latest research in the field. Many of our third-year students seized the opportunity to showcase their hard work by presenting their final-year research projects, sharing their findings with a wider academic audience.

We are especially proud to share that Nasuha Irdina, a Year 3 student, achieved a remarkable accomplishment at the event. She was awarded a prize for Best Poster in the Individual Poster Presentation category. Her poster summarised the findings of her final year project on 'News frames and ethnic prejudice: A study on Malaysian perceptions on genocide across race and gender.' This recognition highlights her dedication, effort, and the quality of her research. The achievement not only reflects her personal commitment but also brings pride to our department and serves as an inspiration to her juniors.

# Events

## Lunch Gathering



The final week of the semester had arrived. After surviving the most challenging presentation yet, the Year 1 students desperately needed to unwind. Dr Ron had the perfect solution: a celebration lunch at Ekues Cabin Cafe, where laughter and cheerful chatter quickly filled the cosy space as we shared stories, experiences, and dreams for the future.

But what started as a simple meal turned into an unexpected adventure. While we waited for our food, one of my friends discovered that despite paying for his order, the restaurant claimed they never received it. What could have been a frustrating situation instead became a show of their helpfulness and kindness. Miss Aisyah and several classmates immediately stepped in to help negotiate with the staff. "It's the longest discussion about a food bill I have ever seen," Prof Glenn observed with amusement as our amateur diplomats worked their magic. Their persistence paid off, our friend not only got his meal but also received a 10% discount as compensation.

Meanwhile, we had a secret mission brewing. One of our classmates was celebrating her birthday the next day, so we quietly ordered cake slices without her knowing. When we surprised her with a sudden celebration, her face absolutely lit up with pure joy. This was a genuine moment that made us grateful for the friendships formed at university.

The afternoon was pure magic. Delicious food satisfied our appetites while the cafe's stunning natural surroundings delighted our other senses. It was complete with a refreshing breeze and breathtaking views, which created an atmosphere so perfect that we simply couldn't bring ourselves to leave. What began as lunch naturally evolved into high tea, with nobody eager to break the spell of this perfect moment.

As evening approached and we finally prepared to part ways, the smiles on everyone's faces told the whole story. Sometimes the best memories aren't planned, they unfold naturally when good people, good food, and beautiful surroundings come together after surviving life's challenges. It was an afternoon that reminded us why these university years, with all their stress and presentations, are truly special.

# Upcoming Events



Welcome party for new students



Psychology Society recruitment drive



Halloween Booth



Neurons Asia talk on neurodiversity in the workplace



End of semester potluck



January intake welcome party



Psychology Society handover ceremony



Psychology conference and alumni homecoming 2026

\*The schedule may be subject to change

# Edited by



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