

## SURVEY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

**COUNTRY PROFILE** *Malaysia is a developing country in South East Asia comprised of two regions: West Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia) with 11 states, and East Malaysia with 2 states (Sabah and Sarawak). It has an area of 127,548 square miles (50,793 square miles for the Peninsula and 76,755 square miles for East Malaysia). East and West Malaysia are separated from each other by the South China Sea. In terms of development, West Malaysia is far ahead of East Malaysia.*

*Economy, Population and Demography:* A market economy. Malaysia has overcome many problems such as the uneven structure of the economy, the lack of educational opportunities and facilities, and unstable social and political conditions due to racial and ethnic groups, and has become one of the most successful developing country in the region. It has a population of 18.3 million.

*Language of Instruction:* Malay, the National Language. Chinese and Tamil as the medium of instruction continues to exist. Greater emphasis has also been given to the teaching of English as a second language. Since 1980s all the institutions from primary schools (with the exception of Chinese and Tamil primary schools) to universities had been using the Malay as the medium of instruction. This is also true for distance education programmes.

*Educational System:* The education system in Malaysia is 6:3:2:2. Basic education consists of at least nine years: six years primary (Age 6-11); and three years lower secondary education (Age 12-14); two years upper secondary (Age 16-17); and two years post-secondary (17-18) before continuing to higher education level. There are three types of primary schools: the *National Schools* using Malay; the *National Type Chinese Schools* using Chinese; and the *National Type Tamil Schools* using Tamil as the medium of instruction. From secondary to tertiary level, the language of instruction is Malay. After completing form four, pupils are streamed into either academic, technical or vocational schools. At the post secondary level, students have several options: they can choose to enter matriculation or form six classes, teacher training colleges, apply for certificate programmes in polytechnics, or they may join the work force.

*Communication  
Infra-structure:* Malaysia has a good communication infrastructure for distance education in terms of printing, radio and TV broadcasts, telephone, postal services, and telecommunication.

**OVERVIEW OF  
DISTANCE  
EDUCATION:**

A distance education programme was first established in Malaysia in 1971 at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), formerly known as Universiti Pulau Pinang. It was offered as a service section under The Centre for Educational Services (CES). This unit separated from the CES to become an independent Unit and thus was directly responsible to the Senate of the University. In 1981, the Unit was subjected to a comprehensive review and a recommendation was made to upgrade it to a Centre with its own Board. In 1983, it became a Centre for Off-Campus Studies. Besides USM's Off-Campus programme, the government also sponsored the Off-Campus programme at the Mara Institute of Technology in 1973. In the private sector, there are a number of institutions offering distance education and correspondence courses such as Disted College in Penang, West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education in Kota Baru, Kelantan; and Malayan Correspondence College in Johor Baru. In Kuala Lumpur, there are presently four private distance education institutions mostly using correspondence techniques, namely Maktab Federal, Institut Philips, Maktab Adabi Gaya Pos, and Sekolah Gaya Pos Utama. Amongst these only Disted College (which have overseas affiliations) offers degree courses.

*Factors Leading  
to Establishment  
of DE Programmes:* The need to provide an opportunity for working adults to have a university education and to help decrease the number of students leaving the country seeking higher education overseas.

*Year of  
Establishment:* 1971 with the establishment of the Off-Campus Studies unit at the Universiti Sains Malaysia.

*Media  
for Distance  
Education:* Print as the principal form of teaching materials supplemented by tele-tutorials, audio-cassettes, video-cassettes, assignments, laboratory experiments, intensive course/residential schools, and a one-year full-time residential requirement.

*Sources of  
Financial  
Supports:* From the Government. It is estimated that at an average of 3.14% of the University annual expenditure is allocated to the Off-Campus Centre totalling 3,035,120 MYR.

*Trends of  
Development in  
Distance Education:*

On an upward trend due to (1) the decreasing opportunities for higher education as the group of young population (age 19-24 years) increases; (2) Immense need for skilled manpower for national economic development in the coming decades; (3) An increasing number of young Malaysians seeking education overseas as a result of stiff competition for places at local universities and institutions; and (4) the need to reduce cost for the establishment of new educational and training facilities. Studies will be carried out within the Sixth Malaysian Plan (1991-1995) on the establishment of an open university in Malaysia.

*Legal Status:*

Supported by a provision of the Constitution of the University of Penang (1969) mandating the University to award external degrees.

*Aims:*

(1) To enable adult students, who for one reason or another do not get the opportunity to pursue higher education conventionally, obtain a degree qualifications; (2) to make a higher education programme available to economically deprived and geographically isolated areas; (3) to increase the rate of training of society members in order to fulfill demand for qualified manpower; and (4) to improve the productivity of those already in the work force by upgrading their knowledge and skills.

*Control and  
Management:*

Distance education is controlled and managed by the Centre for Off-Campus Studies, USM. As a public institution, the Centre for Off-Campus Studies at USM is the largest provider of distance education in the country and is a centralized system. It is a division under the parent institution, which is a conventional university. The centre enjoys a status similar to other On-Campus Schools/Centres with its own Board through which all its activities are organized and administered.

Under the present Constitution of the USM, the principle governing bodies of the University are (1) the Court, (2) Council, and (3) Senate. The Court is the supreme governing body with the Chancellor as chairman. The supreme executive body is the Council which provides for the custody and the use of the university seal, administers university property, and manages non-academic affairs.

The Senate, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, is the highest academic authority, subsidiary to it are the Board of Schools/Centres with their various committees.

The Centre for Off-Campus Studies has its own Board exercising the said responsibility. The Board of the Centre for Off-Campus Studies

is under the leadership of a Director, assisted by three Deputy Directors, and programme chair-persons. The Centre works closely with the On-Campus Schools/Centres for the provision of teaching staff, laboratory, library, central printing and examination facilities, through the Coordination Committee chaired by the University's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), consisting of the involved Deans/Directors of the Schools/Centres. The Centre also has a nation-wide network of regional study centres; each is run by a part-time resident tutor.

*Instructional System:* Malaysia's instructional system for distance education comprises several methods for delivery of the courseware components. Students study at home from printed modules or interactive study guides, listen to supplementary audio-cassettes, view supplementary videos at regional study centres, attend compulsory tele-tutorials, perform laboratory experiments, undertake to complete all assignments, subject themselves to continuous assessment, attend intensive residential schooling, take final examinations, and enter one-year residential schooling after collecting 84 credits.

*Geographical coverage:* Distance education is fully covered in Malaysia through the network of the USM's Centre for Off-Campus Studies, and distance education activities at other public and private institutions. For example, the USM's Centre for Off-Campus Studies has succeeded in its objective to take university education to rural areas such as the east coast region of the Peninsula and the two states in East Malaysia: Sabah and Sarawak. In 1991, there were 11 regional study centres throughout the country. The centres with the largest student population are Kuala Lumpur and Penang, but some of the students in these urban centres may have also come from the rural areas. Regional Study Centres act as local terminals for teletutorials, venues for continuous assessment, laboratories for science experiments, library and media services; and also meeting places for students.

*Research Activities:* Research activities in distance education in Malaysia, conducted by both institutional and individual research groups are increasing. Some research has been conducted elsewhere by staff members i.e. for their Masters degree theses or Doctoral dissertations with financial support from the University. Areas of research activities include learning styles, student characteristics, and faculty's perception of distance education programmes; the role of distance education personnel; problems faced by off-campus students; students' performance in various courses such as Mathematics,

Chemistry, Organic Chemistry; media production such as video production; drop-outs, e.g. of intensive course/residential programmes; and effectiveness of teleconferencing. Research grants are provided by the University as well as outside agencies.

*Enrollment  
and Graduates in DE  
Programmes:*

The enrollment ratio of off-campus students to the on-campus is higher at the institutional level than that at the national one. For instance, the total enrollment of part-time Off-Campus students was 2,847 students at the USM in 1990 (1:3 for external enrollment to internal students). At the national level, the ratio is roughly 1:30 for external to full-time on-campus students. Intake of students into the external programme had been increasing, reaching its peak at 707 in 1986 and decreasing slightly since then. The majority of USM Off-campus students in 1988/89 were teachers (59%) within the age range of 30-34 (48.3%) with the average income of MYR 750-1,000. The male to female ratio is 4:1. So far 2,232 have graduated; at an annual average of 140 graduates of whom more than 80% graduated with Second Class Honours and six students with First Class Honours Degrees.

*International  
Affiliation and  
Cooperation:*

Various distance education institutions in Malaysia have established relationships and cooperation with regional and international organizations and institutions. In the private sector, the Disted College acts as a regional study centre for several overseas institutions such as Adelaide College and Deakin University in Australia and Leicester Polytechnic in Great Britain. In the public sector, the USM Off-Campus programme, for example, has established both formal and informal relations with the Australian International Development Programme (IDP) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Open Learning Institute (OLI) in Canada; Murdoch University, and Deakin University in Australia. Joint-research activities have been undertaken together with the University of South Pacific, Open Learning Institute, Sukothai Thammathirat Open University, Ramkhamhaeng University, Allama Iqbal Open University and *Universitas Terbuka* of Indonesia (assisted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)); and with the British Open University, University of Cambridge's International Extension College, Cambridge (supported by the British Council).

A cooperative network is planned to include the East West Communication Institute (Hawaii, USA), and the Athabasca University, Canada; the University of the Air (UA) and the National Institute of Multimedia Education (NIME) in Japan, covering not

only the field of research but also media production and telecommunication.

*Problems and Constraints:*

Although distance education has proven to be very successful in Malaysia, especially at USM, and major problems had been resolved, there remain certain problems with regards to: (1) Rigid regulations imposed upon adult students such as mandatory attendance of the orientation week, tele-tutorials etc.; (2) Production and revision of printed materials due to copyright ownership; (3) Administration of regional study centres; and (4) Limited access to tele-tutorials in certain parts of the country (Sabah and Sarawak).

**LIST OF  
DISTANCE  
EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS:**

1. The Centre for Off-Campus Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia
2. The Centre for Off-Campus Studies, Mara Institute of Technology\*
3. Private distance education institutions.\*

\*Survey data not available.

**CENTRE FOR OFF-CAMPUS STUDIES  
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

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**INSTITUTIONAL  
DATA**

*Year of  
Establishment:* 1971.

*Name of Head:* Associate Professor Qasim Ahmad  
*Position:* Director, COCS  
*Address:* Centre for Off-Campus Studies  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Penang, Malaysia.  
*Telephone:* (04)887812 and (04)877888  
*Telex:* MA 50254  
*Fax:* 604-876000

**Nature of institution:** Conventional institution with distance teaching department.

**Educational levels  
provided for  
DE programmes:** 1. First Degree  
2. Pre-degree  
3. Continuing education.

<b>Titles and levels of DE programmes:</b>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Level</i>
	1. Bachelor's Degree	First degree
	2. Foundation Science Certificate	Pre-degree.

**Governance:** A national non-distance education institution with distance education department.

**Objectives:** 1. National development  
2. Personal development  
3. Expansion of educational opportunity  
4. Equality of educational opportunity  
5. Training of skilled manpower  
6. Cost-effectiveness  
7. Teacher Education and Training.

<b>Sources of financial support of DE programmes:</b>	<p><i>Tuition Fees:</i> Students are required to pay around US\$230-285.00 of tuition charges.</p> <p><i>Budget:</i> Approximate annual budget for distance education of this institution for 1990 was US\$1,665,719.00.</p>	
<b>Trends of development of DE resources and activities:</b>	<p><i>Expanded:</i> Financial provision Local study centres Telecommunication equipment Study materials and textbooks Teaching force Audio-visual aids.</p> <p><i>Decreased:</i> Face-to-face sessions.</p> <p><i>Stable:</i> Distance education programmes Variety of courses offered Broadcast programmes Library resources.</p> <p><i>Not applicable:</i> None.</p>	
<b>Trends of enrollment in DE Programmes:</b>	Increasing.	
<b>Number of current DE students:</b>	2,847 (1990).	
<b>Number of annual intake of DE students:</b>	Approximately 600-700 annually.	
<b>Number of students currently enrolled in each DE level:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First degree</li> <li>2. Continuing education</li> <li>3. Foundation Science</li> </ol>	<p>2,847</p> <p>180</p> <p>126</p>
<b>Number of annual DE graduates:</b>	Approximately 260.	
<b>Accumulative number of DE graduates:</b>	2,221.	



<b>Components of personnel in DE:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All faculty members are full-time employees.</li> <li>2. Faculty members share their work duties between non-distance education and distance education departments.</li> </ol>																
<b>Number of full-time staff:</b>	Academic: 43 Non-academic: 50 Total: 93.																
<b>Number of part-time staff:</b>	229 (Part-time tutors, lab assistants, and clerks).																
<b>Number of Courses and programmes:</b>	Number of courses offered: 125. Number of programmes offered: 12.																
<b>Production of teaching materials/media:</b>	Teaching materials and media are produced by staff members of the University. They are written in modular forms or in interactive manners. The learning materials are checked by an instructional designer, a subject matter expert and an editor.																
<b>Regional/Study Centres:</b>	Available in 11 regional study centres run by Part-time Resident Tutors. The sources of financial support are from the University. Major functions of these centers are providing tele-tutorial, examinations, library and laboratory facilities.																
<b>Overall student Profile:</b>																	
<i>Age distribution:</i>	<table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;"><i>Years:</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><i>(%)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Under 21</td> <td style="text-align: right;">00.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between 21-30</td> <td style="text-align: right;">29.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between 31-40</td> <td style="text-align: right;">70.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between 41-50</td> <td style="text-align: right;">00.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between 51-60</td> <td style="text-align: right;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Over 61</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>Total:</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>100.0</u></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Years:</i>	<i>(%)</i>	Under 21	00.5	Between 21-30	29.0	Between 31-40	70.0	Between 41-50	00.5	Between 51-60	-	Over 61		<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>
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<i>Geographical distribution:</i>	<i>Areas:</i>	<i>(%)</i>
	Urban	63.5
	Rural	36.5
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

**Occupational and Ethnic Composition of DE Students:**

*Ethnic Composition:* Malay 51%, Chinese 39%, Indian 9%, and 1% of others.

<i>Occupational distribution:</i>	<i>(%)</i>
School teachers	60.0
Administrators/management Personnel	16.0
Clerks	09.0
Self-employed	04.0
Others	11.0
	<u>Total: 100.0</u>

**Future development:**

Possible distance education development in the next 5-10 years are:

1. Improve current practices/policies
2. Offer new programmes, probably of a professional and technical nature such as engineering.

**Major obstacles for implementing distance education:**

1. Financial
2. Staffing.

**Affiliation with regional and international DE organizations:**

None.

**PROGRAMMES OF INSTRUCTION, MEDIA, METHODS, & EVALUATION:**

List of Programme:

1. Bachelor's Degree.

## PROGRAMME I: BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES

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<b>Level:</b>	First degree.
<b>Titles of programmes offered in this level:</b>	1. Bachelor of Arts (B.A) 2. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc).
<b>Courses of instruction:</b>	<i>Humanities:</i> History Geography Literature. <i>Physical Sciences:</i> Chemistry Physics. <i>Biological Science and Technology:</i> General Biology and life sciences. <i>Mathematics:</i> Mathematical sciences Statistics. <i>Social Sciences:</i> Economics Sociology and Anthropology Political Science.
<b>Length of course:</b>	<i>Minimum number of study hours per week per course: 5.</i> <i>Total number of weeks per course: 40.</i> <i>Total number of courses making up programmes: 27-37 (30-40).</i>
<b>Media and methods:</b>	<i>Most dominant:</i> Printed correspondence texts. <i>Dominant:</i> Face-to-face tutoring Tutoring via audio-teleconferencing Practical work Study centres Longer residential school Counselling via mailing Counselling by telephone.

*Least dominant:*  
Face-to-face counselling  
Audio-graphs  
Video-cassettes  
Radio  
Audio-vision  
Audio-cassettes.

**Language of instruction:** Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language).

**Admission requirements:**

1. Completed GCE 'O' Level for Foundation Science  
'A' Level for Degree programmes
2. Meet a minimum required age level of 21 years
3. Be a citizen of the country
4. Get written permission from his/her employer.

**Number of students:** 2,847

**Annual intake of DE students:** Approximately 600-700.

**Evaluation:**

*Continuous assessment:*

1. Written assignments for submission
2. Written regular tests
3. Attendance at the local study centre.

*Final assessment:* Written final examinations.

**Educational and employment arrangements for graduates:** School teachers are normally promoted upon graduation.

**Profile of students in this level:** *By Educational Background:* Data not available.

<i>By Employment:</i>	(%)
Full-time public employees:	70.0
Full-time private employees:	30.0
<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.00</u>

*By types of career:* Data not available.

<i>By gender:</i>	(%)
Male:	80.0
Female:	20.0
<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.00</u>

**Acceptance of  
certificate, diploma,  
and degree:**

Accepted. Students spend their last year on campus and obtain the same degree as other conventional students.