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## Advancing Academic Programmes

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# SoTL Bulletin Vol3.0/2020

## /////// Content in this Volume



- 01 SoTL Inquiry into Curriculum Development
- 02 A Preliminary Study on Strengthening Cinematography Undergraduate Programme Towards Future Ready Curriculum
- 05 Marketing Curriculum Overhaul: Assessing Future Marketers Via Alternative Assessments
- 06 Assessing Future Ready Curriculum Elements in Physical Science Foundation Programme
- 07 Assessing Future Ready Curriculum Elements in Life Science Foundation Programme
- 08 Strategic Development, Implementation, and Assessment of Counselling Undergraduate Programme
- 11 Evaluating the Alternative Assessment Practices in All Current Courses Offered by WC11 Programme
- 13 A Preliminary Study on Strengthening Information Systems (IS) Undergraduate Programme Towards Future-Ready Curriculum
- 16 Enhancing the English For Global Communication Programme Towards A Future-Ready Curriculum
- 19 Towards Future Ready Curriculum: Corporate Management Programme
- 20 Strategic Development and Implementation of Digital Financial Technology for Finance Undergraduate Programme
- 21 Alternative Assessment Practice in Computational Science Programme Core Courses
- 23 Framing IRLS in the Eyes of Major Stakeholders: Designing a Future-Ready IRLS

- 
- 
- 25 Transformation on Teaching and Learning in Politics and Government Studies Programme
  - 28 Complex Problem Solving (CPS) In Mechanical Engineering
  - 29 Redesigning Bachelor of Economics with Honours
  - 30 Designing A Future Ready Curriculum for WA22 Programme
  - 31 The Assessment of Curriculum Content for Plant Resource Science and Management Programme
  - 33 Strategic Development, Implementation and Assessment of Psychology Undergraduate Programme: A Preliminary Study
  - 39 Improving Software Engineering Programme from Students' Perception
  - 40 Contemplating an Accelerated Pathway for The Accounting Programme
  - 41 Pembangunan, Implementasi, dan Penilaian Strategik Dalam Programme Linguistik
  - 43 A Preliminary Study on Curriculum Structure of Resource Biotechnology Undergraduate Programme: Students' Perspective
  - 48 The Development and Implementation of Future-Ready Curriculum in The Aquatic Resource Science and Management Programme
  - 52 Strategic Development, Implementation and Assessment of Quantity Surveying Undergraduate Programme Towards Future Ready Curriculum
  - 60 Changes in Civil Engineering Undergraduate Programme
  - 61 Bespoke Curriculum: Enhancing and Synthesizing the Quality of WA23
  - 63 Software Tools Utilisation Readiness Among Chemical Engineering Students
  - 64 Transformative Learning & Teaching Delivery Through Flipped Learning

# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

by Kartini Abd Ghani, Lee Jun Choi, Sopian Bujang, Ida Juliana Hutasuhut, Jamayah Salli, Muhamad Sophian Nazaruddin, Rizal Abu Bakar, Mai Sumiyati Ishak, and Mohamad Azhari Abu Bakar

## Abstract

The Psychology undergraduate programme has started since 2017 with 53 students for the first cohort. The curriculum was developed more than 4 years back and focusing on the market need to offer psychology programme in Sarawak. The Psychology programme is currently in the process of obtaining full accreditation from the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA). Now, the psychology programme is in its third year and as yet to produce its first batch of graduates. Although the programme is still in the early stage, there is still a need to revisit the psychology curriculum to investigate its effectiveness and whether the existing curriculum addressed the future ready curriculum framework introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education. Thus, the study aims to address the need to enhance the existing curriculum to be future ready and identify the distinctive feature of the psychology programme that makes it stands out and unique. The study also involves investigation into aligning the curriculum content with appropriate teaching and learning deliveries and alternative assessment practices. Thus, it is important for the programme to employ a scholarly approach to curriculum leadership to provide a strategic foundation for quality assurance and quality enhancement of psychology programme as to bring significant impact on students' learning.

## Introduction

The Psychology undergraduate programme is designed to produce professionals with a broad knowledge of psychology who study personality, human development, social behavior, abnormal behavior, cognitive neuroscience, and physiological aspects of human being. The programme offers academic and service activities that are relevant to the needs of diverse stakeholders and the broader community. Based on current trend and issues in the country, no doubt many regard psychology services as a significant service that could promote personal development, foster potential, and nurture well-being. There is also a growing awareness among people, at all levels in the society, about the need for psychologists; be it general practitioners, policymakers, or researchers.

The first batch/intake for the psychology programme was in the year 2017 (Session 2017/2018, Semester 1) and the number of students' enrolment up to now is about 170 students. This year (Session 2019/2020, Semester 1) will be the third batch/intake of students for this programme. Psychology programme is a four-year full-time programme of studies leading to Bachelor of Psychology with Honours. Currently, the Psychology programme is given 'Provisional Accreditation' status by MQA and is in the process of obtaining Full Accreditation.

During the preliminary stage, answers to RQ1 and RQ2 were explored:

### **RQ1: How to design/enhance a future-ready curriculum with distinctive feature(s)?**

During this phase, a brainstorming session was conducted with the programme members using the SWOT technique to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities for the Psychology Undergraduate Programme (WA19). Documents such as External Examiner report and Benchmarking visit report were also analysed. The following are the main points delivered through SWOT brainstorming and document review: