



Developing Industry-Ready Talent for Malaysia and the Region

Through Dana Impak, Khazanah invested in Asia Pacific University (APU) alongside TPG's The Rise Fund in 2023 and continued its investments alongside Creador in 2025. Together, these investments support the next phase of growth for a homegrown university that combines industry-linked curricula and practical learning to develop talent for technology-driven careers.



Founded to address Malaysia's shortage of industry-ready technology talent, APU built a university model centred on employability, affordability and strong industry partnerships. Roughly half its students come from outside Malaysia, so the university serves two purposes: supplying industry-ready talent to Malaysian employers and operating as a homegrown education champion that attracts regional students. With its graduates employed both in Malaysia and internationally, its adaptive model of education offers a compelling example of talent development for a knowledge-based economy.

Knowing that we are making a difference to the lower-income families, when a graduate [from these families] has sufficiently high salaries. He's able to help his siblings and also help settle the parents' debt that was used to put him through education."

Datuk Parmjit Singh
Co-Founder and CEO,
APIIT Education Group

Building Futures, One Graduate at a Time

For Amreek Ian Anak Stephanie Angau, an Information Technology graduate now working as a software developer at Deloitte, APU helped bridge the transition from university to employment. He credits its practical approach with preparing him “to be more confident and to face the working world after graduation”.

Amreek’s story is one of many. With a 100% graduate employability rate, APU has built a strong track record of transitioning its graduates to careers in engineering, technology and finance.

Ainin Sofea Zairul Anuar, who studied Software Engineering and now works at Grab (GXBANK) as a software engineer, cites APU’s diverse student population as the key to broadening her perspective. “I admire and appreciate the cultural diversity here at APU,” she said, “this has given me a very deep experience to understand real life after graduation.

Ain Najwa Arba’in represented APU and Malaysia as Campus Ambassador at the World Data Science Forum in Dubai and achieved third place in the ASEAN Data Science Explorers, all while completing her BSc (Hons) in Computer Science. She attributed her success to APU’s pedagogy, centred around real-world applications of knowledge. “Throughout my study at APU, I have understood the real applications of Data Science and Analytics. The guidance provided by all the lecturers at APU has placed me in a very good position of knowledge.”

Together, these examples reflect APU’s alumni network, now exceeding 90,000 graduates, with more than 18,000 current students from over 130 countries. Close to half of the current student body is international. Close to half of that cohort is international, which makes APU a contributor to Malaysia’s standing as a regional education hub as well as to its domestic talent pipeline. The success of its graduates across different industries and countries alike speaks to its impact in expanding access to higher education and career opportunities.

The Challenge

A Skills Mismatch and an Affordability Gap

Malaysia’s ambition to become a high-income, knowledge-based economy has always depended on an education system capable of producing skilled graduates who integrate seamlessly into a modernising world. However, the education system has been tested for several decades. Demand for talent in emerging sectors such as information technology and telecommunications has grown faster than the supply of suitable graduates. As Datuk Parmjit Singh, APU’s co-founder, recalled, many university programmes remained heavily focused on academic knowledge, with less attention given to the practical skills employers were increasingly seeking.

The challenge was not simply one of access, but also of relevance. Nearly 40% of experienced Malaysian graduates remain in jobs that do not match their skill set, due to the slow creation of high-skilled jobs and misalignment between curriculum and employer expectations¹.

Several structural factors reinforced the gap. Training in technology and engineering is significantly more expensive than classroom-based disciplines, requiring laboratories, specialised equipment and continuous upgrades as technologies evolve. Furthermore, schools have struggled to keep pace with rapidly changing technical fields, while meaningful exposure to technology careers has been concentrated among students in better-resourced urban schools. As a result, many young people, particularly those in semi-urban communities, remained disconnected from opportunities in emerging sectors driving Malaysia’s economic transformation.

For students who aspire to careers in technology, options were limited. Accessing high-quality education frequently meant studying overseas, a pathway beyond the financial reach of many middle-income families. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, private higher education in Malaysia that combined industry relevance, practical skills development, and strong academic quality was largely absent.

These compounded barriers were felt most acutely by young Malaysians. As the generation expected to drive the country’s transition to a high-skill, knowledge-based economy, many found themselves caught between limited public university placements and unaffordable private or overseas education. The result is what Datuk Parmjit Singh describes as Malaysia’s “middle-income trap”: households that fall between public subsidies and international education, with few pathways to high-quality, industry-relevant training.

¹ Khazanah Research Institute. 2024. Shifting Tides: Charting Career Progression of Malaysia’s Skilled Talents. Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Research Institute.

The Solution

An Industry-Run University, Built and Verified at National Scale

APU's response to these gaps was to establish an education institution designed to embed industry engagement into its operational model. Instead of anchoring its programmes to a fixed curriculum, the university adopts an approach of continuous adaptation, evolving alongside technological advances and changing labour market demands. Over the past three decades, this model has led to formal curriculum partnerships with companies such as Microsoft, IBM, Cisco, AWS and SAP, contributing directly to the design and relevance of classroom content. The model is reinforced by a faculty that includes industry practitioners, who bring expertise and real-world experience directly to students, equipping them with the skills required by an increasingly technology-driven economy.

APU's industry-first orientation extends to its day-to-day operations. Recognising the pace at which technology sectors evolve, the university has built systems that allow curricula to be updated in real time, in addition to periodic review cycles. Emerging developments are actively monitored and shared across academic teams, so that new technologies, industry practices and market trends can be incorporated into the syllabus to adapt quickly to industry realities. For instance, APU launched its intelligent systems programme before AI had entered mainstream use and has since incorporated AI-enabled applications into its own administrative and teaching operations.

The impact of this approach is visible beyond APU itself. Since 2017, APU has been part of MDEC-backed Premier Digital Tech Institutions initiative², which brought higher-education institutions and industry partners together to strengthen Malaysia's digital talent pipeline. Across participating institutions, computer science enrolment increased from approximately 15,500 to 22,000 students, while reported graduate employability rose from 88% to 95% during the programme's first two years. These outcomes demonstrate that closer industry-academia alignment can contribute meaningfully to closing the country's longstanding skills gap.

Affordability remains a central consideration in APU's model. For academically strong students whose families cannot cover the difference between government loans and tuition fees, the university offers a formal fee-waiver scheme, with discounts ranging from 50% to full tuition coverage. APU has also worked to keep its overall fees within the mid-range compared to other private universities in Malaysia despite the inherently high cost of technology and engineering programmes. It does so through an operating model that includes five student intakes annually and year-round utilisation of campus facilities.

To remove barriers in the education pipeline, APU has invested in increasing career awareness and exposure to technology-related fields among school students. Education counsellors are regularly invited onto campus, while robotics competitions and technology-focused activities provide young people with direct exposure to emerging fields in technology. These initiatives serve as a form of career guidance, particularly in communities where access to opportunities for engagement with emerging technologies remains limited.

These efforts aim to create opportunity for future students, as much as APU has done for its graduates. Datuk Parmjit shared that graduates frequently receive multiple job offers before completing their studies, with competitive salaries. A recent MDEC Fresh Graduate Salary Survey found that APU graduates were among the highest-paid fresh graduates in Malaysia³, on average. Yet for him, the strongest evidence of impact is neither employability statistics nor salary data, but the growing number of families who return generation after generation. "We have siblings of our graduates here all the time," he reflected. "Now we even have children of our graduates studying here."

Highest-paid fresh graduates in Malaysia (survey as presented by MDEC in Dec 2024)



How Investment Helped

Supporting a Homegrown Platform for Industry-Ready Talent

The problem APU was founded to solve has not gone away. Employers continue to compete for graduates equipped with cutting-edge technology skills, and few institutions produce them in the numbers the economy requires. APU has been encouraged to raise its output, but scaling technology and engineering education is capital-intensive: it requires laboratories, software licences, specialised equipment and teaching staff with industry experience.

Khazanah's investments in APU began in 2023 investing alongside TPG's The Rise Fund. Khazanah stayed the course in 2025, continuing its investments alongside Creador as APU entered its next phase of growth.. This continuity reflects Dana Impak's conviction in APU's role as a homegrown platform for developing industry-ready talent. Through its investment, Dana Impak seeks to support APU in scaling the delivery of industry-relevant education and broadening its contribution to Malaysia's talent pipeline.



Looking Ahead

Continuous Evolution for a Changing Future

APU's growth over the past three decades has been accompanied by increasing international recognition. In the QS World University Rankings 2027, the university was ranked 528th globally⁴, placing it among the top 2% of universities worldwide⁵. It was also ranked 147th in the QS Asia University Rankings 2026⁶ and among the top five private universities in Southeast Asia by AppliedHE Ranking 2026⁷. APU is also the first Malaysian university to be awarded an overall QS 5-Stars Plus rating⁸, a distinction held by only a small number of institutions globally.

Looking ahead, APU's aspiration is to continue evolving alongside the industries and technologies shaping Malaysia's future economy. Underpinning its approach is a belief that relevance depends on the ability to continuously absorb new information and translate it into action.

APU's experience suggests that when academic quality, industry relevance, and accessibility are pursued together universities can strengthen the talent pipeline which a knowledge-intensive economy depends on.

Impact to Date *(as of early 2026)*

18,000+ students
9,000+ international students
from 130+ countries



Alumni

90,000+
graduates



Global Ranking

QS World 2027

#528
(Top 2% Globally)

QS Asia 2026

#147

Applied HE Private
University Ranking
2026

#5 in ASEAN

Distinction

1st Malaysian university to achieve
QS 5-Stars Plus overall (one of
only 24 globally) in 2021



⁴ QS World University Rankings 2027, Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation institution profile, QS Top Universities, topuniversities.com/universities/asia-pacific-university-technology-innovation-apu-malaysia.

⁵ "The University", Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation website, apu.edu.my/the-university, accessed September 2026.

⁶ QS Asia University Rankings 2026, QS Top Universities, topuniversities.com/asia-university-rankings.

⁷ AppliedHE Private University Ranking: ASEAN 2026, AppliedHE, appliedhe.com/rankings/private-university-ranking-asean-2026.

⁸ Highest rating in the QS Stars university rating system, awarded to institutions demonstrating excellence across Teaching, Employability, Facilities, Inclusiveness and Internationalisation. APU first awarded this rating in November 2021.



For more information, visit
www.apu.edu.my