



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Dear Freshers, a degree is not a destination

ACROSS the country, thousands of young Malaysians are stepping into university lecture halls for the first time. There will be orientation programmes, new friendships, photographs with proud parents and inevitably, the familiar question: "What are you studying?"

Perhaps we should ask a different question: What kind of person do you hope to become?

For too long, university education has been spoken of almost entirely in the language of employability involving grades, internships, salaries and career prospects. These matter.

But if four years of university produce graduates who can answer examination questions yet cannot question assumptions, communicate across differences, show empathy, or act with integrity, we should ask whether higher education has fulfilled its purpose.

University is not simply an extension of school. It is one of the few periods in life when young people are given the intellectual space to encounter unfamiliar ideas, argue respectfully, fail safely, change their minds and discover that the world is far more complicated than any textbook suggests.

So to our newest undergraduates: Do not spend your university years merely collecting marks. Sit beside someone who does not think like you. Join a society unrelated to your programme. Volunteer. Ask your lecturer the uncomfortable question. Read beyond the PowerPoint slides. Learn to speak confidently but also learn when to listen.

And please, make mistakes. A university that allows students to graduate without ever being intellectually uncomfortable has probably protected them too much from the very education they came to receive.

Artificial intelligence can now summarise articles, generate essays and even suggest answers within seconds. What it cannot decide for you is what you stand for, what deserves your curiosity, or what sort of human being you wish to become.

Your transcript may open the first door. But when you leave university, make sure you carry more than a scroll. Carry a mind that questions, a heart that cares and a character that cannot be downloaded.

**ASSOC PROF DR
MUHAMMAD NOOR ABDUL
AZIZ and PROF DR
NURAHIMAH MOHD YUSOFF**
 School of Education
 Universiti Utara Malaysia