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PUSAT PENGAJIAN KEJURUTERAAN AWAM
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
CAWANGAN PULAU PINANG



Experience and Insight : Canada-ASEAN Exchanges Program

Ts. Hafizah Muhamad Azlan

Ts. Hafizah is a senior lecturer at UiTM Pulau Pinang and is currently taking a break from teaching to focus on her PhD studies. While working on her degree, she received the Canada-ASEAN Scholarship and Educational Exchanges for Development (SEED) from the Canadian Bureau for International Education. This awesome scholarship allowed her to spend six months as a Visiting Research Student (VRS) at the University of Ottawa, Canada, from January to June 2024.

This program, offered every year by the Government of Canada, provides students from ASEAN member countries with the opportunity to engage in short-term study or research at Canadian institutions. The scholarships and educational exchanges aim to support the achievement of all sustainable development goals (SDGs) and align with the SEED goals which is to strengthening people-to-people ties between Canada and the Indo-Pacific region.

Therefore, to qualify for the scholarship, students must apply and meet certain requirements, including having their local university partnered with the Canadian institution where they wish to study or conduct research. Luckily, in 2022, our Vice-Chancellor at UiTM established a strategic partnership with the University of Ottawa, making this scholarship opportunity possible!

Ts. Hafizah really made the most of her time during the attachment program, soaking up all the knowledge and experience she could from the university and the area around it. She was guided by Prof. Dr. Ghasan Doudak from the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Ottawa, who helped her with her research. With his support, she was able to test timber beams and take advantage of the university's top-notch equipment and facilities.

She also got the chance to attend the 2024 Ottawa Wood Solutions Conference organized by the Canadian Wood Council (CWC). It was a great way for her to meet new people in her field and pick up some cool insights about timber structure research. A bunch of pros from the timber industry, including university experts and folks from different sectors, were there.



Figure 1 : Me at University of Ottawa



Figure 2: With some of my friends who are helping in the laboratory.



Figure 3: With some postgraduate students at the work station

While networking at the conference, she hit it off with a postgraduate student from Carleton University in Ottawa. Hence, she had a chance to see the student doing some structure testing in her university and took the chance to look around the campus.

On top of that, she dove into several university programs that enriched her both spiritually and physically. These included online and in-person seminars. She also pushed herself by presenting her research at the Postgraduate Seminar, where Civil Engineering students shared their projects and got helpful feedback from each other. This experience not only boosted her presentation skills but also gave her fresh perspectives on various research areas in her field.

During her time in Canada, she received a warm welcome from the High Commission of Malaysia in Ottawa and built strong connections with fellow Malaysians in the area. She even took part in one of their programs, attending a special screening of Airforce The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa at Cineplex Cinemas Lansdowne, Ottawa which are the initiative to promote Malaysian films in Canada.

Balancing her PhD studies and career wasn't easy, but she gave it her all. While in Canada, she also had the unique chance to celebrate both Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, experiencing firsthand how these festive occasions differ from back home in Malaysia. Outside of her academic life, she made the most of her time by exploring the country, sightseeing with her family whenever she had the chance.

Overall, spending six months there helped her grow more mature, gain valuable knowledge, and develop essential life skills for navigating challenges.



Figure 4 : While conducting the timber beam bending test



Figure 5: Gathering with Malaysian friends in Ottawa