

## Sector briefing

# Education, Skills & Training Opportunities in Malaysia

## Why Malaysia?

Global investors have pin-pointed Malaysia as one of the top markets, according to a report published by UK Trade & Investment and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Within ASEAN, Malaysia is the EU's second largest trading partner, with more than 2,000 EU companies present in Malaysia.

It is fast becoming an 'Educational Hub' of SE Asia and is one of the four priority markets for British products and services related to education and training worth over £250 million a year. The sector has long been key in the UK-Malaysia relationship. Currently, about 13,500 Malaysian students are in UK to further their studies and an additional 45,000 are either studying for UK degree programmes or undertaking UK professional qualifications in Malaysia. University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus is now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year. Newcastle University's Medical School, University of Southampton's Engineering School, Epsom College and Marlborough College will be opening by 2012. A number of other British universities and schools are also considering opening their branches here.

Around 60 UK tertiary institutions have links or collaborative arrangements with Malaysian counterparts. These attract students from SE Asia, China, the Middle East and Africa. Currently, there are about 85,000 foreign students and the Government's target is to hit 150,000 by 2015.



**“Malaysia is fast becoming an ‘Educational Hub’ of SE Asia... Great importance is being laid on achieving higher standards and improved quality in education and skills.”**

Find general information on the Malaysian market conditions on [UKTI's website](#). The [Doing Business Guide for Malaysia](#) gives an overview of Malaysia's economy, business culture, potential opportunities and an introduction to other relevant issue.

## Opportunities

The Tenth Malaysia Plan and Economic Transformation Programme launched in January 2011, reaffirms the New Economic Model and outlines more measures to transform Malaysia into a high-income economy. This, among others, requires training, re-training and upskilling of the workforce. Great importance is being laid on achieving higher standards and improved quality in education and skills to face global challenges.

Malaysia's rapid development, political and social stability, close historical and educational ties, a familiar legal and financial framework and the widespread use of English make this an attractive place for British companies to do business. Plus, strategic location from which to penetrate other ASEAN markets, and further into India and China.

The 4th Asia-Europe Meeting for Ministers of Education (ASEMME) will be in Malaysia in 2013 to enhance international cooperation in engaging business and industry in education.

The three ministries related to education and training are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Human Resources. The sector is at the top of the Malaysian Government's agenda for the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) and was strongly emphasised in the Economic Report with largest sum of £8 billion for the 2011 budget. Thus, opportunities are growing and key areas are detailed below.

Over the next five years, there will be more childcare centres, pre-schools, international and private schools, community colleges, skills/corporate training institutions and foreign branch campuses. Many of the university colleges and polytechnics are being upgraded and given full university status. More institutions are being encouraged by the Government to be involved in R&D and innovation activities, and to work closely with industries. All these will create demand for educational products and services, and business collaboration.

Four educational hubs are being developed, which includes Iskandar Malaysia's 'Edu City' and Kuala Lumpur Education City (KLEC).

## Formal Education Structure

The education and training system includes both public and private providers at all levels. It is highly competitive and almost entirely examination orientated. They are now considering revising the examination system. A new comprehensive assessment system, which gives more emphasis to continuous evaluation and creativity to nurture a culture of innovation is being implemented through a pilot project covering 50 schools.

Children have limited allowance to be creative in the classroom and the Government wants to change this and allow greater flexibility in teaching and learning methodology, and in the use of educational technology.

## Early Childhood Care and Pre-School Education

Pre-school education is part of the national education system. Children generally begin their education at pre-schools/kindergartens from the age of four to six. The main government agencies that offer this education are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KEMAS), ABIM, the State Religious Department and the National Unity Department.

There is strong focus now on developing Early Childhood Care (Permata scheme) and Pre-school Education under the new Prime Minister - Datuk Seri Najib Razak. Pre-school education will be part of the mainstream public school education system by 2012. Over £20 million has been allocated for this and there are plans to increase childcare centres and pre-schools, and improve teaching and learning in these places. Within the next two years, 87% of children are expected to attend pre-school.

Many of the teachers in the 20,000+ childcare centres and pre-schools are being encouraged to pursue programmes to upgrade from Diploma to Degree and Masters levels. There are calls for joint awarding of qualifications, programme/product development and staff exchange with foreign institutions. As part of this search, the National Association of Early Childhood Care and Education Malaysia (NAECCEM) had a week-long study visit to the UK in November 2010 to look at British expertise, products, services and qualifications available for the sector. Private childcare and pre-school business, especially in the urban areas, are fast growing.

## Schools

Public and private funded educational institutions co-exist in the education system. Primary and secondary school education in the public sector is free. There are 14,850 primary and 2,837 secondary schools with 5.48 million students and 400,000 teachers. In addition to this, there are 60 international and 14 expatriate schools, 32 schools for children with special educational needs, 85 technical schools and 21 colleges offering matriculation programmes.

Under the Ministry of Education's National Education Blueprint, public school heads would be trained over 3-4 years in Administration and Leadership Skills to ensure effective and efficient school management. To start, around 30,000 head/deputy head teachers of leading public schools, under the 'Cluster School Programme', are being sent in stages to institutions overseas. After training, these heads will be given more independence in the management of their schools and extra funding for improving facilities. 'Cluster Schools' are the centres of excellence focusing on niche areas, such as music, sports, ICT, science, language and special education.

Two policy issues on the role of English in the Malaysian education system was debated in 2009 and the current Government have decided to revert the teaching of Maths and Science from English to Malay (native Malaysian language, which is also the national language) by 2012 and improve the teaching and learning of English in schools, especially rural schools. The Ministry of Education has allocated £116 million to improve the command of English for the 35,000 in-service teachers and for the remaining in-service teachers who are teaching non-English subjects, including Mathematics and Science. An additional 375 English language teachers are being recruited from overseas, mainly from UK & Australia, to help with this.

## Higher and Further Education

There are 23 public universities, 35 private universities and university colleges, 5 foreign branch campuses, 21 polytechnics and 485 private colleges. Malaysian higher education is heavily segmented – public, private and vocational sectors, with few connections. In 1998, 13% of those between 17-23 years old were in higher education - now it is 30%.

The Government target is that at least 40% of the nation's population receive tertiary education by the year 2020. More than 20,000 lecturers in higher education institutions are in the process of upgrading their qualifications to postgraduate level (MA & PhD). Under Vision 2020, 60% of future graduates would be from science and 40% from arts.

## Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET)

Lifelong Learning, Continuing Professional Development and, Technical and Vocational Education & Training are being actively promoted to meet the demands of fast developing Malaysia. In fact, the Government is looking towards the European experience to boost TVET here and this could lead to tie-ups with European institutions involving programmes and exchange of teaching staff. Currently, only 10% of Malaysian students are enrolled in local TVET institutions. The Government plans to raise this to 20% over the next five years. A revamp is being done to remove any stigma about vocational studies. Vocational schools would be rebranded into vocational colleges and a clearer education pathway would be set where TVET institutions could offer diploma and higher diploma courses, and ease the students' path to university.

The Skills Development and Training Blueprint 2008-2020 provides the direction and strategies for developing TVET. The blueprint is supported by a strategic action plan for guiding its implementation and require TVET agencies to formulate long-term training plans and key performance indicators. Along with this, the Ministry of Human Resources will be setting up a 'National Human Resource Management Centre' and provide services to SMEs. Private sectors are encouraged by the Government to establish technical institutions.

The National Advisory Council for Education and Training have formulated a comprehensive plan for lifelong learning programmes, which covers distance learning, part-time courses and skills upgrading. The enrolment of students in lifelong learning programmes in public institutions of higher education will be increased by 10%. Flexible entry requirements, such as work experience and qualification recognised by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) will be introduced. The Human Resource Development Fund, which can be accessed for lifelong learning, will

be expanded to include firms involved in franchising, broadcasting, outsourcing, and motor vehicle repair and maintenance. Lifelong learning programmes in community colleges will be enhanced through the introduction of e-learning.

A new competency assessment system for assessing civil servants' performance, replacing the competency level assessment examination, is expected to be introduced in July 2011.

If you have any questions on the opportunities above, contact the UKTI contacts named in this report. Business opportunities aimed specifically at UK companies are added daily to UKTI's website. These leads are sourced by our staff overseas in British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates, across all sectors and in over 100 markets.

You can be alerted to business opportunities on a regular basis by registering on the UKTI website. [Find out more on UKTI's business opportunities service on the UKTI website](#)

## Major events and activities

### National HRDF Conference & Exhibition

by the Malaysian Ministry of Human Resources  
([www.hrdf.com.my](http://www.hrdf.com.my))  
Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre  
Kuala Lumpur  
12-13 September 2011

### BETT ASIA Conference & Exhibition

([www.bes-asia.com](http://www.bes-asia.com))  
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre  
Contact: William Prieto-Parra, British  
Educational Suppliers Association (BESA)  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7537 4997  
E-mail: [William@besa.org.uk](mailto:William@besa.org.uk)  
8-9 November 2011

### International Conference on Lifelong Learning

Seri Pacific Hotel, Kuala Lumpur  
14-15 November 2011

### IPSEF ASIA (International and Private Schools Education Forum)

([www.ipsef.net](http://www.ipsef.net))  
Kuala Lumpur  
Contact: Mark Roelofsen  
Director, Method International  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7394 1060  
E-mail: [mark@methodinternational.com](mailto:mark@methodinternational.com)  
March 2012

### Assessment Tomorrow Conference

([www.assessmenttomorrow.com](http://www.assessmenttomorrow.com))  
Kuala Lumpur  
May 2012  
Contact: Martyn Roads  
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& MR Educational Consultants  
Tel: +44 (0)1622 746129  
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### Find full details of all events in this country and sector on the UKTI website.

New export events are added daily to the site and [you can register to be alerted to them](#) on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

UKTI's Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) provides grant support for eligible Small & Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to attend trade shows overseas. Find out more about [UKTI support](#) for attendance at overseas events.

## UKTI contacts

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## Next steps - How UKTI can help

British companies wishing to develop their business in Malaysia are advised to undertake as much market research and planning as possible in the UK. UKTI's team in Malaysia, with its wide local knowledge and experience, can provide a range of services to British-based companies wishing to grow their business in global markets.

This can include:

- Provision of market information
- Validated lists of agents/distributors
- Key market players or potential customers in Malaysia
- Establishment of interest of such contacts in working with you

- Arranging appointments
- Organise seminars or other events for you to meet contacts and promote your company in Malaysia

This work is available via our [Overseas Market Introduction Service \(OMIS\)](#) a chargeable service which assists British-based companies wishing to enter or expand their business in overseas markets.

To find out more about commissioning this work, or accessing other UKTI services and specialist advice, please visit the UKTI website to find [contact details for your local UKTI office.](#)

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