Getting to know the dean

Professor Datin Dr Norhanom Abd Wahab has helmed UM’s Institute of Graduate Studies since 2004, bringing years of experience and expertise to IGS evolve for the better.

Q: Tell us about yourself. Where did the Dean of IGS study, and what were your interests while studying and later, while working?
A: I did my BSc in Microbiology at Queen Elizabeth College, University of London (now part of King’s College, University of London). I then joined UM in 1981 as a tutor, and did my master’s and PhD in UM on a part-time basis while working. I have gone through the full cycle, previously as a student and now as a manager of students. My postgraduate research was on Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma and Epstein-Barr virus. My current research interest is in anti-tumour activity of medicinal plants.

Q: Why did you choose to go into academia?
A: After joining as a tutor, I realised that life as a researcher is quite exciting. As a young lecturer I was already well-travelled, attending conferences and workshops overseas, and had the opportunity to be a part of a vibrant research group with international networking. In the 1980s I was already publishing in international journals which now appear as tier 1 journals in the ISI database. Life as an academician, especially the research bit, is never boring.

Q: What is your vision for UM’s IGS?
A: To fulfil what we promise to achieve in the IPS mission, which is to enhance postgraduate management in support of UM becoming a world renowned institution of choice for postgraduate education. By 2020, UM will be a postgraduate research university. IGS will help prepare the faculties for this new era.

Q: How do you feel IGS has evolved since you have taken the reins?
A: When I first became dean, we had 6,000 postgraduate students, among them 700 international students and we produced 99 PhD graduates. Now we have more than 11,000 students, among them 2,800 international students, and we produced 309 PhD graduates last year. The numbers have significantly increased, and our application of technology that makes the running of IGS more efficient has also improved. In 2004, the application forms were photocopied black and white forms, but now much of the administrative material is already online.