SDG 8

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Universiti Malaya (UM) entered 2025 with a complete set of employment policies and spent the year putting them into practice. It ran a long-term contract scheme that puts contract staff on terms close to those of permanent staff. It recognised four staff unions and released one union leader to serve full-time with CUEPACS for seven months. It launched two inclusion guidelines and funded 2,459 conference-leave approvals for 1,348 staff. This report sets out that evidence against each indicator in the THE Impact Rankings 2027 methodology for SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Only activity in place or carried out in calendar year 2025 is claimed.

The chapter covers UM's employment practices, its investment in staff, the work placements built into its programmes and the security of employment it offers, alongside the University's research on decent work and economic growth.

01 Fair Pay Above the National Minimum Wage

UM pays every academic and non-academic employee above the national minimum wage. Malaysia does not set a statutory living wage, so the University benchmarks itself against the legal wage floor, the Minimum Wage Order 2024, which raised the monthly minimum from RM1,500 to RM1,700 on 1 February 2025. UM's monthly take-home pay for all staff stands above this level. Pay is also more than salary: it combines basic pay with fixed allowances, medical cover and Employees Provident Fund contributions.

02 A Voice for Every Staff Group

UM recognises four staff unions and associations, which together cover every group of employees. The Persatuan Kakitangan Akademik UM (PKAUM) represents academic staff; the Persatuan Pegawai Tadbir dan Ikhtisas UM (PEKERTI) represents administrative and professional officers; the Kesatuan Kakitangan Am UM (KKAUM) represents general and support staff; and the Kesatuan Kakitangan Am Pusat Perubatan UM (KKAPPUM) represents support staff at the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre.

In 2025 UM went beyond formal recognition by releasing a KKAUM office-bearer to serve with CUEPACS, the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services, from 16 May to 15 December 2025. Recording this seven-month release under the University's staff attachment programme treats union work as a legitimate career placement and strengthens collective representation at national level.

Labour rights apply to all staff, including women and international staff. Membership is open to every UM employee through the union or association for their staff group, regardless of gender or nationality. Unions meet management formally through the departmental joint council (Majlis Bersama Jabatan, MBJ), which under Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bil. 7/2020 must meet at least three times a year, with representatives' attendance treated as official duty. At national level, Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bil. 6/2020 establishes the National Joint Councils, where elected union representatives negotiate pay, allowances and conditions of service with the Government.

03 Inclusion Without Discrimination

UM's commitment to ending workplace discrimination is set out in the UM Inclusive Policy for Persons with Disabilities, which aims to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunity for students and staff. The policy is governed by the UM Inclusive Committee (Jawatankuasa Inklusif UM), chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, which meets at least three times a year. On 1 March 2025 the Deputy Prime Minister launched the UM-InOKU Inclusive Campus Guidelines, which put the policy into practice through reasonable accommodation, universal design and a Disability Liaison Officer in every responsibility centre.



Figure 5. Launch of the Garis Panduan Kampus Inklusif OKU Universiti Malaya (UM-InOKU) by the Deputy Prime Minister, 1 March 2025. Source: UM news; photo: Corporate Communications Centre, UM.

Later in 2025 the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment, working with the Human Resources Department (JSM), issued the UM Neurodiversity Guidelines, which cover the recruitment and support of neurodivergent staff, including reasonable accommodation, fair performance appraisal, workplace safety and confidentiality. Equal opportunity is also written into UM's terms of service: SPUM opens contract posts to citizens and non-citizens alike and bases promotion on merit alone. Workforce data for 2025 give further context. UM employs 29 staff registered as persons with disabilities across academic, professional and support roles. Its contract workforce is also open to international talent: according to Human Resources Department records, at 31 December 2025 UM had 1,329 contract staff, of whom 1,008 were Malaysian citizens and 321 (24.2%) were non-citizens. Among the 847 contract academics, 529 were citizens and 318 (37.5%) were non-citizens, while the 482 contract non-academic staff included 479 citizens and 3 non-citizens. These figures describe the nationality composition of UM's contract workforce.

04 Freedom from Forced Labour, and Fair Terms for Outsourced Workers

UM's commitment against modern slavery, forced labour and child labour rests on Article 6 of the Federal Constitution, which prohibits slavery and forced labour, and is carried into University policy through Pillar 5 of the UM Sustainability Policy 2021–2030. Every appointment under SPUM requires a statutory declaration, a medical certificate and a signed letter of undertaking, so each employee enters service voluntarily, on written terms and above the legal working age. The University's Code of Freedom from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment adds a zero-tolerance stance and confidential reporting channels.

The same standards extend to people who work at UM through contractors. Every vendor must sign an integrity pact, and suppliers are reviewed for risk, including their treatment of workers. Outsourced core services such as cleaning, security and landscaping must comply with the Minimum Wage Order 2024 and the Employment Act 1955, so that workers on campus receive at least the statutory wage and protections whether they are employed by UM or by its contractors.

05 Pay Scale Equity and Commitment to Gender Pay Equity

Universiti Malaya (UM) is committed to ensuring fair, transparent and gender-equitable remuneration practices across its workforce, guided by the principles of equal pay for work of equal value, merit-based career progression and non-discrimination.

Permanent staff are remunerated under the federal Public Service Remuneration System (Sistem Saraan Perkhidmatan Awam, SSPA), as stipulated in Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 1 Tahun 2024, effective 1 December 2024. The remuneration framework applies equally to all eligible employees, regardless of gender.

Contract non-academic staff are remunerated under the Universiti Malaya Service Scheme (Skim Perkhidmatan Universiti Malaya, SPUM), approved by the University's Board of Directors on 11 July 2024 and implemented on 4 September 2024. The scheme was established to reduce disparities between permanent and contract employment arrangements while promoting equitable career opportunities and employment benefits.

Under these remuneration frameworks, employees within the same grade are subject to a standardised salary structure. Initial salary placement is determined by relevant qualifications, competencies and job requirements, while annual salary progression and promotion are guided by performance assessments, key performance indicators and merit rather than gender.

These structured, gender-neutral remuneration practices provide an institutional foundation for pay equity. UM recognises the importance of monitoring remuneration outcomes across gender groups and addressing any unjustified disparities to advance gender equality and equitable employment practices.

06 Fair Appraisal and the Right to Appeal

UM staff can challenge decisions on pay, appraisal and conditions through three established channels. Under the University's performance management system (MyPPSM, Pekeliling Sumber Manusia v1.0, 2024), staff may appeal their annual appraisal during a 30-day window each January, which matters because annual salary increments depend on that appraisal. Promotion decisions may be appealed within six months. Broader complaints about rights, welfare or treatment go to JSM through the formal grievance procedure (Prosedur Kilanan), with counselling support available from the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment. Together, these channels provide ways for employees to seek review of decisions that affect their pay and career.

07 Enhancing Staff Awareness on Welfare Benefits

Throughout 2025, the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment (CCDE) conducted staff welfare briefings across various faculties and departments to enhance awareness of available welfare support and benefits. One such session, at the Faculty of Pharmacy in July 2025, was attended by both academic and non-academic staff. The briefing highlighted key welfare schemes, including PERKESO contributions, ex-gratia payments, funeral assistance, Zamalah, and other staff benefits, while encouraging greater participation in welfare programmes. This initiative reflects UM's commitment to promoting staff wellbeing, decent work conditions, and social protection for its workforce.





Figure 1. Staff welfare briefing by the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment (CCDE) at the Faculty of Pharmacy, July 2025. Source: CCDE, UM.

08 Building a Supportive Workplace through AKRAB

Rakan Pembimbing Perkhidmatan Awam (AKRAB) is a peer support programme implemented across the Malaysian public service to promote employee wellbeing through guidance, psychosocial support, motivation, and a supportive workplace culture. At Universiti Malaya (UM), AKRAB serves as an internal support network that complements the University's staff welfare initiatives. On 24–25 September 2025, AKRAB UM organised a Strategic Planning Workshop at Akademi Pengajian Melayu, providing members with an opportunity to strengthen the organisation's direction, refine strategic priorities, and enhance its role in supporting staff wellbeing. The workshop reinforced AKRAB's capacity to contribute to a healthy and supportive work environment while advancing UM's commitment to employee welfare and organisational excellence.





Figure 2. AKRAB UM Strategic Planning Workshop, Akademi Pengajian Melayu, 24–25 September 2025. Source: AKRAB UM.

09 Staff Reflection: 'Serve & Be Counted'

On 21 February 2025, the Staff Reflection session led by the Registrar, Prof. Ir. Dr. Abdul Aziz Abdul Raman, highlighted the importance of career development, competency enhancement, and the need for Management and Professional staff to remain relevant within the UM ecosystem. Discussions covered promotion prospects, workplace flexibility, continuous professional growth, and the role of senior officers in strengthening the University. Emphasis was also placed on visibility, leadership, and influence to ensure meaningful contributions and reinforce their value as key assets to UM.



Figure 3. Staff Reflection session 'Serve & Be Counted' for Management and Professional staff, led by the Registrar, Prof. Ir. Dr. Abdul Aziz Abdul Raman, 21 February 2025. Source: Universiti Malaya.

10 ACUM 2024 Awards Ceremony

The Anugerah Cemerlang UM (ACUM) 2024 ceremony was held on 20 May 2025 at Dewan Tunku Canselor, UM. As the University's highest recognition event, the ceremony celebrated members of the UM community who demonstrated outstanding achievements and excellence in their respective fields. The event was officiated by His Royal Highness the Sultan of Perak, Chancellor of UM.

The ceremony highlighted UM's commitment to recognising excellence and fostering a culture of high performance. The achievements of the award recipients serve as an inspiration to the wider university community and reflect the dedication and contributions of individuals towards advancing the University's mission and reputation.



Figure 4. Award presentation at the Anugerah Cemerlang UM (ACUM) 2024 ceremony, Dewan Tunku Canselor, 20 May 2025. Source: UM.

11 Happy@Work 2025: Supporting Staff Through Change

Decent work also means looking after people when their jobs change. On 19 June 2025 the Human Talent Planning Centre of JSM held Happy@Work at Dewan Semarak, Akademi Pengajian Melayu, for non-academic staff being rotated to new responsibility centres under UM's job-rotation exercise. Rather than simply issuing transfer letters, the University gave each affected employee a full day of support. Prof. Dr. Mohd Awang Idris of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences led a session on change, emotions and cognitive appraisal; participants met their new supervisors to review their job descriptions; and psychologists from the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment ran an adaptation workshop. The Registrar opened the programme, which involved 104 participants and secretariat members.

Participants reported more positive ratings after the programme. The 58 participants who completed the evaluation rated their feelings on a scale of 1 to 6 before and after the day. Before the programme, 29% gave a positive rating of 5 or 6; afterwards, 84% did, and no participant rated their feelings below 4. Happy@Work reflects UM's attention to staff wellbeing during organisational change.





Figure 6 (left). Happy@Work 2025 programme poster, 19 June 2025. Source: Laporan Program Happy@Work 2025, JSM.

Figure 7 (right). Slot 1, "Changes and Emotions", by Prof. Dr. Mohd Awang Idris, Happy@Work 2025, 19 June 2025. Source: Laporan Program Happy@Work 2025, JSM.



Figure 8. Participants, facilitators and JSM secretariat, Dewan Semarak, Akademi Pengajian Melayu, 19 June 2025. Source: Laporan Program Happy@Work 2025, JSM.



Figure 9. Slot 3, “Beradaptasi dan Berjaya”, an adaptation workshop by psychologists from the Centre for Counselling and Disability Empowerment, 19 June 2025. Source: Laporan Program Happy@Work 2025, JSM.

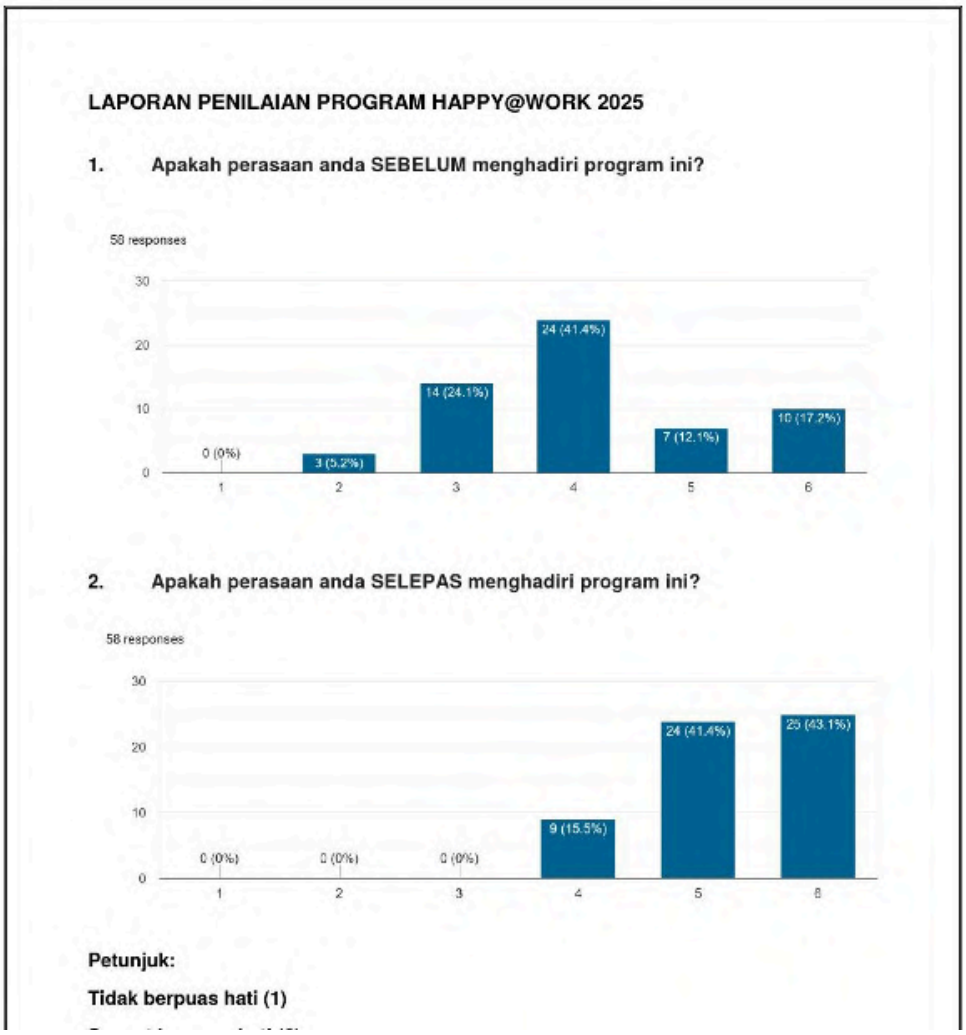


Figure 10. Participant feelings before and after Happy@Work 2025 (58 responses; 1 = not satisfied, 6 = very satisfied). Source: Laporan Program Happy@Work 2025, JSM.

12 Investing in Staff Careers

UM invests in its employees' growth through career-development leave open to academic and non-academic staff alike. In 2025 the University approved 2,459 applications for conference leave from 1,348 staff, including 1,438 overseas trips to 73 countries supported by RM2.71 million in approved funding. It also approved 872 research-leave applications from 472 staff, amounting to 12,556 days of leave, of which 262 were taken abroad, and 229 sabbaticals, 56 of them abroad and 173 in Malaysia.

Non-academic staff benefit as well. Forty non-academic staff took up 41 attachments in 2025 with organisations such as CUEPACS, UM Holdings and the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre, broadening their experience beyond their home departments. Twelve staff, including seven on contract appointments, took part in international mobility programmes in Indonesia, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, France, Spain, Poland, Türkiye and Japan.

13 Preparing Students for Productive Work

Many UM programmes include compulsory industrial training (latihan industri) or a clinical, teaching or professional placement as a credit-bearing part of the degree. UM supports students in finding these placements through dedicated events. On 13 November 2025 the Centre for Industry Training and Relations Advancement (CITrA) and Talentbank held the UM Internship Fair 2025 at Akademi Pengajian Melayu, combining an employer fair in Dewan Semarak with a preparation workshop and industrial-training briefing in Dewan Angsana.

The Graduate Employability and Career Centre (GECC) ran UM's largest career event, Industry Pay It Forward (iPIF) x UM iFEST 2025, at Dataran DTC from 24 to 26 June 2025. With Talentbank, it offered mentor hot-seats, pre-screened on-the-spot interviews and talks by employers including CelcomDigi, Shopee, Jobstreet, InvestKL, PayNet and ICAEW. GECC also provided transport for UM students to the Ministry of Higher Education's Karnival Kerjaya Nasional 2025 at MITEC on 14 and 15 June, where more than 100 employers were recruiting.



Figure 11. UM students meeting employers at the UM Internship Fair 2025, organised by CITrA with Talentbank, Dewan Semarak, Akademi Pengajian Melayu, 13 November 2025. Source: CITrA, UM.

14 Secure Employment Through the UM Service Scheme

Job security is central to decent work, and Skim Perhidmatan Universiti Malaya (SPUM) is UM's main instrument for providing it. The scheme moves contract non-academic staff onto long-term, non-pensionable appointments funded from the University's own revenue. UM's 2025 staff mobility records show what this means in practice: contract staff held appointments such as 15 January 2024 to 14 January 2028 and 8 March 2024 to 7 March 2034, both well beyond THE's 24-month threshold for a secure contract. SPUM staff also receive 16 days of conference leave each year, supporting their professional development. The size and make-up of this contract workforce are given under Inclusion Without Discrimination.

UM enters 2026 with these employment policies in place and with 2025 records of how they were implemented. The University will continue to extend SPUM's long-term appointments, sustain its partnership with staff unions through the joint councils, and implement the UM-InOKU and Neurodiversity Guidelines across every responsibility centre. Programmes such as Happy@Work and the career-development leave schemes will keep staff wellbeing and growth at the centre of how UM manages its workforce, while CITrA and GECC continue to connect students with employers. Through these efforts, UM aims to be a model of decent work for Malaysia's public universities.

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