

# Training Thinkers, Not Just Researchers

*Insight from the FETE Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) Programme 2025 Edition*

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From 1 July to 30 August 2025, the University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM) served as a vibrant hub of intellectual exchange and collaboration, hosting the Food Environment in Transitioning Economies (FETE) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) programme. This nine-week intensive programme, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity, convened 11 doctoral students from across the FETE consortium partner countries: Ghana, Malaysia, South Africa, and Tanzania, building upon the momentum from the 2024 edition held in South Africa.



**Photo 1:** The DTP student cohort poses for a group photo at the UNM campus

At its core, the DTP transcended the conventional role of a doctoral training programme, embodying a transformative academic journey. Designed specifically for advanced-stage PhD students, the curriculum was designed to equip students with the transdisciplinary research skills essential for navigating the complex realities of food environments in transitioning economies.

Students engaged deeply with six core areas:

- Advanced data and spatial analysis: equipping students with the tools and skills to analyse data and spatial information effectively
- Qualitative data interpretation: developing students' ability to interpret qualitative data accurately and comprehensively
- Policy and systems mapping: providing students with knowledge and skills to view the food system as a complex web of interconnected components and to map their relationships for system-based actions
- Data visualisation: enhancing students' capacity to visualise data and communicate their findings more effectively
- Scientific storytelling: equipping students with skills to communicate scientific concepts and findings in a compelling and accessible manner
- Interdisciplinary collaboration: developing students' understanding and engagement in interdisciplinary research and collaboration



**Photo 2:** Students attending a training session led by Dr Goh Ee Von



**Photo 3:** In one of the DTP's training sessions ahead of the FETE Project Annual Workshop

Expert resource persons from Asia, Europe, Australia, and Africa, enriched these sessions, providing mentorship that underscored the programme's global relevance and the value of cross-border academic exchange.

What set this year's DTP apart was its hands-on, applied learning approach. Students worked directly with their own research data, enabling them to immediately apply new skills and make tangible progress on their theses. A notable highlight of the programme was the opportunity for students to present their work at two major events: the FETE Project Annual Workshop (18–20 August) and the International Symposium on Food Environments (ISFE 2025) (21–22 August). Both events were organised by the Malaysian FETE team and held in Malaysia.



**Photo 4:** Koh Su Yuan (right) sharing her views in response to questions posed to the postgraduate students about their projects during the FETE Project Annual Workshop



**Photo 5:** The DTP student cohort alongside other participants at the 1-Minute Rapid Fire Presentation, organised as part of ISFE 2025

Several students received awards for their exceptional presentations. Notably, Scott David Hastie and Koh Su Yuan (both from Malaysia) secured first and second place, respectively, in the oral presentation category at the Nutrition Society Malaysia Conference (29–30 July). At the ISFE 2025, Alice David Gomezulu (Tanzania) captivated the audience with her dynamic delivery, winning the 1-Minute Rapid Fire Presentation award. Four additional students were also recognised for their excellence in various categories, underscoring the exceptional calibre of researchers emerging from the DTP programme.



**Photo 6:** Scott David Hastie (first from left) received the Best Oral Presentation award at the Nutrition Society Malaysia Conference. Pictured with him (left to right) are Dr Lee Siew Siew and Professor Mahenderan Appukutty, President of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia



**Photo 7:** Alice David Gomezulu won the Best Rapid-Fire Poster Presentation prize

Beyond academic development, the DTP fostered a strong sense of community, resilience, and shared purpose. Students left not only with enhanced research and knowledge exchange skills but also meaningful international connections, and a renewed commitment to driving transformative change in their local food systems.

As the FETE DTP continues its evolution, its impact is evident: it is nurturing a new generation of scholars equipped to address the pressing challenges of food environments with creativity, collaboration, and courage.

Photo credit: Sayed Mohammadhossein Modaresi/University of Nottingham Malaysia