



Awards Asia 2026

Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Aftab Amin, <i>The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)</i>
Submission title or project name	Advancing gamification virtual reality and generative AI for anatomy, genetics and biochemistry education: an innovative active-learning pedagogical approach
Nominee / key personnel	Aftab Amin (lecturer in life sciences)
URL	https://cei.hkust.edu.hk/en-hk/project/gamification-virtual-reality-pedagogy-provision-active-learning-genetics-forensics
Submission	Aftab Amin’s project “Gamification and Virtual Reality Pedagogy for Active Learning in Genetics, Forensics, and Biochemistry Laboratories” has transformed the pedagogical framework of the LIFS1904 Laboratory for General Biology course at HKUST, which serves some 300 students from diverse disciplines. Addressing challenges such as high enrolment and low engagement, he implemented a customisable gamified virtual reality platform (VRP) to foster an immersive educational experience. This innovative project also integrates generative AI to enhance active learning and formative assessments, benefiting all students, including those with special educational needs. Feedback from more than 200 students indicated that 85 per cent felt more motivated, while 90 per cent found the VRP beneficial for understanding complex concepts. Incorporating GenAI into assessments allowed students to create infographics, enhancing creativity and visual literacy. Amin’s establishment of the Innovative Pedagogy Student Society, the R&D Lab and the Preventive Medicine Outreach Society exemplify his commitment to integrating innovative technologies into education and community outreach.



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Institution Name	Benyakan Pongkitwitoon, <i>Mahidol University</i>
Submission title or project name	Innovative botanical learning: PYGE101 and herbal appreciation
Nominee / key personnel	Benyakan Pongkitwitoon (assistant professor, department of pharmaceutical botany)
URL	https://www.facebook.com/herbalappreciation/ https://mux.mahidol.ac.th/courses/course-v1:MU-PY+PYGE101+MU-PY_000001/about https://mux.mahidol.ac.th/courses/course-v1:MU-PY+MOOC66-08+MU-PY66/about
Submission	Benyakan Pongkitwitoon harnesses her passion for plants to innovatively integrate formal and leisure botanical education, bridging structured university courses with flexible lifelong learning. Her flexible general education course, PYGE101 Herbs in Daily Life, allows students from diverse faculties to follow online lectures at their own pace and then join the fun, hands-on workshops. In 2024-25, more than 300 students per semester crafted herbal inhalers, painted with natural pigments and explored medicinal gardens. Many continued their learning through the Herbal Appreciation community. This public platform expanded through fully booked Herbal Walks and outreach at the Thai Book Fair 2025 and yjr WoW Festival 2025, helping PYGE101 MOOCs surpass 12,000 learners worldwide. Pongkitwitoon's "Botanical Neighborhood" solo exhibition (2025) further merged science and art, while her innovations were recognised with awards from the faculty, the university and the UKPSF senior fellowship, affirming her broader impact.



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Institution Name	Haze Ng, <i>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</i>
Submission title or project name	Strategic partnership and community establishment for enhancing creative and cultural learning experience and fostering long-term professional development in fashion and textile design
Nominee / key personnel	Haze Ng
URL	
Submission	Haze Ng counters the limitations of traditional fashion and textile design education, particularly in cultural immersion, by implementing a collaborative strategy, moving from subjective creativity to a framework emphasising critical reflection, interdisciplinary thinking, sociocultural relevance and collaborative real-world problem-solving. This involves establishing creative partnerships and cultural communities among students, industry experts, intangible cultural heritage practitioners, artists, artisans and local stakeholders. This approach fosters a dynamic learning environment for students to construct knowledge through embodied interactions with realities. Through active real-world engagements and collaborations, students gained critical and multidimensional perspectives for generating design solutions, developed a strong sense of purpose and design ethics as well as heartfelt appreciation for cultural heritage and the interrelationship within and across communities. The derived projects significantly enrich educational outcomes and benefits students' long-term development by nurturing design identity, enhancing professional confidence, offering industry exposure and cultivating valuable networks.



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Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Pannawit Sanitnarathorn, <i>Assumption University</i>
Submission title or project name	Transforming music education through creativity, technology and social innovation
Nominee / key personnel	Pannawit Sanitnarathorn (assistant professor, and dean of the School of Music)
URL	
Submission	Pannawit Sanitnarathorn has reimagined music education for a new generation of creators. As the founder of Thailand's first BA in music entrepreneurship, he integrates creativity, technology and community engagement into every aspect of learning. His flagship initiative, AMBER (ABAC Music Business and Entrepreneurship Records), transforms classrooms into real record labels that allow students to write, produce and release their own music. Beyond campus, his projects – including “See by Ears, Hear by Heart” for visually impaired youth and “Don’t Call Me Old, Just Experienced” for older adults – use music as a tool for inclusion and healing. Sanitnarathorn also leads innovations such as a digital concert app and the SPiRiTA Chamber Ensemble, bringing classical music to wider audiences. His mission to educate through creativity and compassion is captured in his philosophy: “Fail with us, succeed without us.”



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Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Pauline Luk, <i>University of Hong Kong</i>
Submission title or project name	Transformative impact supporting students innovation in medical education
Nominee / key personnel	Pauline Luk
URL	https://tdg.hku.hk/hub#/project/64c38f3cccd9f06bf5d6666 https://ets.med.hku.hk/simhse https://www.singhealthdukenus.com.sg/acp/medicine/medical-humanities/singapore-medical-humanities-conference-2024
Submission	Pauline Luk demonstrates innovative leadership in medical education by fostering empathy, curiosity and a deeper understanding of humanity. Inspired by a student, she launched a community-based decision-making game to cultivate empathy among medical students, engaging them in grassroots interviews and scenario development. The empathy game expanded beyond the classroom, fostering intercultural understanding through international exchanges and community engagement, including documentary projects with vulnerable populations. As curriculum coordinator, she pioneered student-directed learning pathways, enabling students to design courses on complex topics such as health inequality, sexual violence, mental health, teen pregnancy and end-of-life care, involving more than 200 learners. Her initiatives empower students as curriculum designers, researchers and community advocates, with many presenting at international forums and winning awards. Additionally, she developed immersive historical tours and mindfulness apps, further enriching experiential learning. Luk's work enhances motivation, promotes societal contributions and bridges academia and community, exemplifying transformative innovation in medical education.



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Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Praveen Kulkarni, <i>JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research</i>
Submission title or project name	The heart of healing: integrating health humanities education for nurturing humane healthcare professionals
Nominee / key personnel	Praveen Kulkarni (professor of community medicine)
URL	https://jssuni.edu.in/jssaher/medical-college/medical-education-unit.html
Submission	According to Hippocrates, the aim of medicine is “to cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always”, highlighting the subject as both science and art. Yet in today’s technology-driven era, the humanistic side of care is often overshadowed. To bridge this gap, Praveen Kulkarni developed an innovative health humanities curriculum using the ADDIE instructional design model. The six-month elective programme covers empathy, communication, teamwork, ethics, professionalism and leadership through experiential methods including poetry, storytelling, visual arts, cinema and activities based on the Theatre of the Oppressed. Over the past five years, more than 1,000 students have benefited, showing significant improvement in empathy, reflective practice, interpersonal skills and communication. By integrating humanities into health professional education, this initiative helps to shape future healthcare providers who are not only competent in delivering clinical services, but also compassionate, patient-centred caregivers dedicated to providing holistic care.



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Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Rosszen Yorkah N Rivera, <i>Lyceum of the Philippines University Cavite</i>
Submission title or project name	Culinary excellence through innovation: transforming hospitality education and inspiring global leaders
Nominee / key personnel	Rosszen Yorkah N. Rivera
URL	
Submission	Rosszen Yorkah N. Rivera is a culinary arts professor, a mentor and a college secretary at the Lyceum of the Philippines University–Cavite’s College of International Tourism and Hospitality. Her service is characterised by industry-connected experiential teaching, in which she draws on academic knowledge to create globally competent leaders in hospitality and tourism. Rivera integrates postgraduate professional training, culture and sustainability appreciation, and etiquette in teaching aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Her teaching and mentoring strategies are enriched with international exposure and empower professional advancement – they are nothing short of remarkable. Thanks to her efforts, her graduates are now excelling as chefs, entrepreneurs and industry leaders. As such, they are testament to how far Rivera has come in achieving her aspiration to transform hospitality education and practice. She is a transformative and innovative educator, and an inspiring as model for the rest of the world.



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Most Innovative Teacher of the Year

Institution Name	Yang Hongsuk, <i>Seoul National University</i>
Submission title or project name	Innovating operations education through experiential learning and student-centred design
Nominee / key personnel	Yang Hongsuk
URL	
Submission	Yang Hongsuk has advanced operations and service management education at Seoul National University by combining experiential learning, reflective assessments and institutional reform. His courses integrate simulations such as the Beer Game and the Inventory Simulation Game, giving students first-hand experience of supply chain complexity and strategy. He introduced a “cheat sheet” assessment system that shifted focus from memorisation to meaningful understanding, and he strengthened engagement through “student information sheets” that incorporated feedback into class design. His innovations extend beyond the classroom: he co-developed South Korea’s first course bidding system, ensuring fairness and transparency in registration across MBA programmes, and contributed foundational research for SNU Genie, the university’s intelligent academic information service. These reforms have measurably increased student satisfaction, learning outcomes and equity in higher education. Yang’s approach demonstrates how combining creative pedagogy with systemic reform can transform business education and prepare students for leadership in complex, global environments.