

# English help for undergrads

**NEW STRATEGY:** Student mentors who are good in language will help weaker ones

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**S**TUDENTS with a good command of English will act as mentors and peer facilitators to improve undergraduates' language proficiency.

This strategy is part of the Higher Education Ministry's goal to improve undergraduates' English proficiency.

It is divided into classroom learning and beyond-the-classroom learning.

Ministry director-general Professor Datuk Dr Rujhan Mustafa said: "Future graduates will have a higher level of English, with the good ones becoming better and the better ones will be excellent.

"The programme is not limited to enhancing their competency in English, but extends to a wider leadership role."

Other beyond-the-classroom

learning strategies are the native-speaking programme and self-access learning.

Last week, the *New Straits Times* reported that the ministry had approved a plan to improve the standard of English among undergraduates, based on their competency level, when the new undergraduate term begins in September.

Students who in Bands 1 and 2 in the Malaysian University English Test, a pre-requisite to enter public universities, will get intensive basic vocabulary and grammar lessons.

Rujhan said: "They will also be grilled to remove their fear of speaking in English.

"There will not be a formal examination because the focus will be on them using English daily."

Students in Bands 3 and 4 are expected to have a working knowledge of English, thus, their focus will be on sharpening their language skills.

For those in Bands 5 and 6, the

highest in the test, they will be trained to use the language more efficiently in their fields of specialisation.

Rujhan said: "Students will be taught the English For Employability course and the English For Specific Disciplines course, for example, engineering.

"However, all students are expected to progress from their initial level.

"This means before graduation, students entering with Band 1 can take General English, English for Employability and possibly English for Specific Disciplines, depending on their faculty."

The ministry identified five universities — Universiti Technology

Mara, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin and Universiti Putra Malaysia — to start off the plan.

Other technical universities, such as Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, will follow suit.

"This is the first phase of the plan.

"We expect all public universities to carry out the plan by 2015."

Federation of Malay Students Union president Jais Abdul Karim said the system should be carried out soon because an in-

crease in English proficiency would enable students to excel in other subjects.



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**Professor Datuk Dr Rujhan Mustafa**