

V-Cs ON HOW TO CUT DROPOUT RATES

They propose providing financial help, extending fee payment period, relaxing academic policies

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THE high dropout rates in public institutions of higher learning have alarmed educational experts.

Last week, the Dewan Rakyat heard that 17,613, or 2.99 per cent, of a total of 589,879 undergraduates did not complete their tertiary education last year, and 13,291 students, or 2.27 per cent, did not complete their studies in 2020.

Among the main reasons for this was a failure to register for the new semester, failing examinations, as well as health and personal problems.

To curb the high dropout rates, University Putra Malaysia Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Roslan Sulaiman said the institutions must provide assistance to undergraduates to continue their studies, including providing an extended period to pay education fees.

“Apart from the undergraduates who failed their examina-



Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Roslan Sulaiman

tions, some were dismissed either due to the failure to register or because they had withdrawn from their programme.

“The reasons given by these undergraduates are financial difficulties, loss of interest or transferring to another institution.

“Due to this, the institutions need to assist undergraduates in continuing their studies by offering financial assistance through *waqf* management and zakat, counselling services, as well as providing hybrid teaching and learning facilities.”

Based on UPM’s statistics, he said, the number of undergraduates who failed and were dismissed in the 2020 and 2021 sessions was low at 0.11 per cent



Universiti Teknologi Mara Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Roziah Mohd Janor says universities must provide flexibility and relax academic policies to allow undergraduates to flourish. FILE PIC

compared with 0.19 per cent and 0.26 per cent in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

He said the university provided four additional semesters for undergraduates who were not able to complete their studies within the stipulated period. This policy has been implemented in the university’s academic system since 2005.

“The university allows undergraduates who were dismissed due to the failure to register (for the new semester) to be readmitted, provided that the readmission application is made within two semesters of the time they were dismissed.

“In addition, we allow our stu-

dents to change their programme provided that they complete two semesters of their studies.

“However, the approval would depend on the admission requirements and available slots in the programme.”

Roslan said although an allocation for undergraduates to change their programmes could be implemented by institutions to prevent them from discontinuing their studies, further research should be conducted to determine the efficacy of the measure.

Echoing his sentiment is Universiti Teknologi Mara Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Roziah Mohd Janor, who said in-

stitutions should provide some flexibility and relax academic policies to allow undergraduates to flourish.

The flexibility in the academic policies, she said, could allow the undergraduates to resit an examination should they fail rather than reapply to the system, which could take a longer time.

“The reason why they fail is because they did not perform well academically, especially if it is a tough subject like mathematics, which is a fundamental subject in every university.

“If the students keep failing and repeating the subject, perhaps we could look into the data and take into account the subjects that they have passed to allow them to continue their studies.”

Roziah also said the grace period for undergraduates to reapply could take up to more than one semester as the university did not allow students to make immediate changes to their programme.

“At the moment, those who want to change their programme must reapply.

“They are not allowed to switch programmes immediately as there is an academic policy that needs to be followed.

“Hence, maybe the government or the Malaysian Qualifications Agency could allow this to happen in the future.

“The way I look at it, we should give students the opportunity to flourish as it is better late than never, right?”