The Star

Matriculation or foundation?

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THE matriculation programme is not the only way Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) top scorers can gain access to public universities. They can also enrol in foundation programmes.

Universiti Sains Malaysia School of Educational Studies professor in curriculum studies and education policy Prof Dr Hazri Jamil said both matriculation and foundation programmes are formal tertiary education options for those who have completed their secondary education.

“Both have its own strengths and are designed to cater different needs, making it challenging to compare their level and quality,” he explained.

He said matriculation offers a broad and standardised curriculum that ensure students meet the general requirements of public universities nationwide. Exams are the same for every student regardless of which university they are enrolled in.

“This standardisation is a mark of quality, ensuring all students obtain a consistent level of education,” he said.

On the other hand, Prof Hazri said foundation programmes are more specialised and tailored to align closely with the undergraduate programmes of the host university.

“This can lead to more focused and relevant preparation for a students’ chosen field of study, potentially enhancing the quality of education in terms of subject-specific knowledge and skills,” he said, adding that the quality of education in both programmes are equivalent in terms of preparing students for higher education, but they serve different purposes.

Ultimately, Prof Hazri said choosing between the two would depend on a student’s specific needs including their career goals and academic vision, as well as the university they wish to attend.

“Both programmes have the potential to offer high-quality education if they are well-designed and effectively implemented,” he said.

What's the difference

	Matriculation	Foundation programmes
Duration	1 year/ 2 years	1 year
Number of institutions offering	15 matriculation colleges and 2 Mara colleges	15 universities excluding polytechnics
Types	- 1 year - 2 years (Bumiputra only)	**Open programmes** ● Students can enrol into degree programmes at other public universities **Closed programmes** ● Students must continue their degree at the same public university
Where to study	- All local universities - Some universities overseas	- Public universities and polytechnics
Categories	- Science - Engineering - Accounting - Professional Accounting	- Science/Arts/TVET
Minimum requirement (SPM) *Number of credits depends on the programme	- 7 credits	- 5 credits
Elligibilty	- All 10A students. - Acceptance is based on academic scores (90%) and co-curricular scores (10%). *There is a 90% quota for Bumiputra students	- Certain foundation courses are only for Bumiputra.
Benefits	- Provides a holistic education encompassing academics and real world skills. - Students are exposed to local and international co-curricular and co-academic activities. - Those who pass will receive the Matriculation Certificate that qualifies them to apply to serve at Grade 29 in 39 civil service schemes. - Course is free. Students only pay the registration fees.	- Tailored curriculum designed to align with specific degree programmes at the host university. - Easier transition and smooth progression to undergraduate courses at the same institution. - Flexible with more options for students in terms of specialisation and subject choice.
Limitations	- Very competitive. - Specific requirements and qualifications that may be difficult to meet.	- More expensive. - Each university has its own set of entry requirements, based on the specific programmes, including minimum grades and subject prerequisites. - Limited spots available.

How to enrol

Matriculation:

- Apply online (**matrikulasi.moe.gov.my**) at the end of the school year and update the information no later than five days after SPM results are announced.

Foundation:

- Through UPU Online portal for courses in Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (Usim), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), National Defence University (UPNM), Polytechnics.

- Foundation courses in UM, UiTM, IIUM, UMS and Unimas are only for Bumiputra.

- Apply directly to the university for Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) (Physcial Sciences, Social Sciences and Life Sciences foundation), Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA) (Foundation in Science and Technology) and selected courses in UiTM.

Source: Various university websites and Prof Dr Hazri Jamil

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