

## **Why some SPM grads don't want to go back to school**

Ahmad Sakari from Kuching, Sarawak, sat for his Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination early this year.

Results are expected by mid-year, but Sakari has no plans to further his studies once they are out.

For him, the main issue is cost.

"It would be better for me to focus on working after I finish school, instead of doing things halfway," he said.

"I know my economic situation and that of my family. They might not be able to help me if I run into financial trouble while I am studying."

Sakari is one of 10 SPM graduates from different economic and educational backgrounds with whom MalaysiaNow recently spoke. Of the 10, four said they did not intend to continue their studies at the tertiary level, due to a number of reasons.

These include the high cost of living, and the desire to work and earn an income of their own.

Some said they believed in the necessity of formal education in fields such as medicine, accounting and law.

But, like Sakari, they also said that many students were forced to drop out of university due to financial constraints.

A recent survey by the UCSI Poll Research Centre found that only half of the SPM graduates who participated in the study intended to pursue their studies at the tertiary level.

Just 51% said they planned to continue studying, while 39% said they would look for a job and 10% had no plans.

Afifah Fansuri, who attended a private secondary school, said she was not confident in university programmes which she described as too long and expensive to boot.

"If public universities in Malaysia can offer study modes that are lighter and shorter like those offered at universities in Australia, the UK and the US, I'm sure many more would want to further their studies," she said.

In Malaysia, the minimum length of diploma level studies is around two and a half to three years – five or six semesters – while a bachelor's degree programme is equivalent to four years.

Others with whom MalaysiaNow spoke said they wished to focus on building a career, starting from the bottom of the food chain or doing freelance work.

Tay Ai Hee and some of her classmates are making ends meet by doing part-time work and volunteering at a centre for abandoned animals in Melaka.

Their goal is to open a pet hotel and spa within the next five years.

"We need to start now," Tay said.

"If we go to university for four years, in 10 years we might only have five or six years of experience working.

"But if we start now, in 10 years, we will have 10 years worth of experience."

She said this would also mean 10 years of savings for the future.

Data from the **statistics department** showed that in 2019, some 390,000 or 72.1% of SPM graduates were not inclined to continue their studies.

These numbers were in line with the trend in other countries including the UK where, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, only two-thirds of school-leaving students said it was important to attend university.

Raqib Shafei, who was born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, said he wanted to focus on his hobby of playing video games which he believes could also be a career path.

He is active in live streaming games, and has over 7,000 followers on social media.

"I can't focus properly if I further my studies and live stream for money at the same time," he said.

"I have to choose one. So I chose to do what I prefer doing."

The six others who spoke to MalaysiaNow said they needed a university education in order to achieve their ambitions to become teachers, engineers and dentists.

Some were also interested in economics and mass communication.

They, too, said they were concerned about the cost of living, and urged the government to help students like them through the 2023 budget which is still being debated in Parliament.

"Review the weaknesses in the education loan system," they said.

"And increase the loan amounts in line with inflation."

<https://www.malaysianow.com/news/2023/03/30/why-some-spm-grads-dont-want-to-go-back-to-school>