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UM franchise programme flayed

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Academic Staff Association of Universiti Malaya today criticised the university's franchise programme for matriculation of science students, saying the scheme was being implemented in a haphazard manner and lacked transparency.

Under the scheme, science students applying for matriculation courses at Universiti Malaya are sent to selected private institutions of higher education once all places at the university have been filled.

The private institutions selected under UM's franchise programme are Kolej Uniti, Seremban; Goon Institute, Bangsar; Institut Maxisegar, Bukit Sentosa; Cempaka College and Institut Kemajuan Ikhtisas Pahang.

Five universities - Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Sabah - have franchise programmes with private colleges to increase the number of places.

The president of the Academic Staff Association of Universiti Malaya, Associate Professor Datuk Mahathir Mohd Khir, said the scheme was causing confusion on two levels.

Firstly, neither the university's prospectus nor its advertisements advised students of the possibility that they might be placed in private institutions instead of UM.

Secondly, although it was understood that the franchise scheme was to accommodate the overspill from UM, Mahathir said only 300 of the 2,000 places in the university's science faculty had been filled.

At a Press conference at the UM Arts Faculty today, Mahathir spoke of the confusion faced by many students who came to register last week, only to be told that they were being placed in private colleges.

As the private institutions had their own fee structure, students might have to pay between RM8,000 and RM12,000 per year, compared to the university's fees of RM3,000.

Mahathir said he could not understand why students had been placed in private institutions even before the university's quota had been filled.

Commenting on yesterday's announcement by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak that Mara would provide sponsorship for most of the students allocated places in private colleges, Mahathir said that he failed to understand the Government's wisdom in spending funds on costly private institutions at a time of economic setbacks.

When contacted, the office of UM Vice-Chancellor Tan Sri Dr Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad said it could not comment on the issue.

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