

Unimas offering degree course in nursing from May next year

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UNIMAS



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KUCHING, Thurs. — Universiti Malaysia Sarawak is scheduled to start its degree course in nursing in May next year.

Its Vice-Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr Zawawi Ismail, said Unimas has the necessary staff and was prepared to offer the four-year degree programme.

He said the first batch of students would number between 30 and 40, and studies would commence in May next year.

"This nursing programme is similiar to our medical course in that it will be a problem-based kind of learning," he said.

Zawawi said this at a Press conference after a Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony between the university and Telekom Malaysia at the Unimas campus in Kota Samarahan today.

The MoU seeks to increase the areas of co-operation between the two bodies such as in research, information sharing and sharing of academic materials, exchange of expertise and personnel, and co-sponsorship of special programmes.

The MoU also marks the provision of the "Televarsiti" service by Telekom to the students and faculty members. Televarsiti, which is based on the "Interactive Voice and Fax Response" system, contains information on student registration and examination results.

Zawawi signed on behalf of the university while Telekom was represented by its senior vice president of Network Services Syed Mustafa Syed Ali. The ceremony was witnessed by Unimas Council chairman Tan Sri Bujang Mohd Nor.

Zawawi also said two institutes would be set up by Unimas later this year. One is the Institute of East Asian Studies and the other is the Institute of Design and Ergonomic Applications.

On distance learning, Zawawi said Unimas started considering the proposal a year ago, and if everything goes according to plan, the university's distance learning programme will be set on the ground sometime

late next year or early 1998.

"So far, we have pockets of work on this project which started about a year ago. We are now trying to integrate what we have at the moment," he said.

Zawawi said he could not state for certain what type of courses would be offered under this type of learning because everything was basically still at an experimental stage.

He, however, pointed out that many things needed to be looked into before such a programme could be offered.

"Among the requirements is that the recipients must have multi-media terminals.

"Which means we have to think in terms of how widely such facilities are available, including in places such as Kapit or Bario for instance," he said.

On staff shortage, Zawawi said Unimas was short of staff in all areas and that about 100 vacancies existed in the university.

At the moment, Unimas has about 200 academic staff and of this 30 per cent are expatriates.

"This shortage is quite a critical issue. For instance, we want to expand our engineering division but we cannot do it because there's nobody around to teach.

"Many of the qualified engineers are not keen to be academicians because working in the private sector is more lucrative.

"As an example, a fresh engineer can easily get a monthly salary of about RM2,000 outside while an academician, even one with a PhD, can't command such a salary.

"Hopefully corporatisation later can address this matter," he said.

Among other things, Syed Mustafa said that Telekom Malaysia was determined to foster closer and stronger relationships with institutions of higher learning in the country.

This was to create, he said, an environment which encouraged research to produce new technologies by Malaysians, thus, reducing the dependence on foreign technologies.