

Six proposals to boost quality of varsity research output

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LETTERS: According to a 2014 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation report, higher education and research policies in Malaysia emphasised global university rankings that entailed an increased publication rate.

Consequently, university faculty members were pressured to publish in top-tier international journals. It could be noted that the National Higher Education Action Plan 2011-2015 devised a strategy to achieve a world-class research university, too.

For such a university to be realised, the action plan calls for improving the quality of academic publications so that more staff achieve at least 100 indexed citations.

Here are a few considerations for policymakers to refresh action plans for sustainable quality research outputs in higher education institutions in Malaysia:

WE must not only consider the number of publications and citations, but also the role of the researcher in the publications i.e., as primary and/or principal (or corresponding) authors.

A MINIMUM two years of postdoctoral training should be required for an individual to qualify for a starting level university faculty position.

REVISIT the requirement for completing postgraduate training within a time frame with a strict number of publications. An unwritten obligation to pass anyone who enrolls for such a degree should also be relooked.

At the same time, the requirement for completed postgraduate supervision should be revisited in the interest of quality research and supervision.

EVALUATION of academic and research staff based on the amount of the grants must be replaced with the ratio of grants to research outputs.

EXTENDING the time to complete a research funded by a grant must be on a case-by-case basis. However, failure to complete a project within the stipulated time does not mean research termination, and,

REVISIT performance indicators of the Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) ranking so that they align with global university ranking indicators.

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The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times