PETALING JAYA: An employers’ group today urged the government to synchronise the matriculation programme, the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) examination, and pre-university courses, saying the three should be of equal quality and completed within the same time frame.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said it was not right for one of the pathways to be easier or shorter than the others.

"If the matriculation programme can be completed in one year, the government should review STPM and see if it can be completed within the same time frame," he told FMT.

On comments by academic Teo Kok Seong of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia who said the matriculation programme and pre-university courses are much easier than STPM, Shamsuddin said this should not be the case.

He said the government could continue with different pathways to universities, but the quality of examinations should not be compromised.

"If the government wants to give equal opportunities to all, it needs to re-look the whole policy, not let one course be easier or shorter than the others."

The end result, he said, should be that all students go through the same level of examination to enter university.

From an employer’s point of view, Shamsuddin added, all three pathways have their strengths and weaknesses.

"What we want are competent graduates," said Shamsuddin who previously attributed the low employment rate of local graduates to a lack of communication and critical thinking skills.

"For that, we also need to look at courses and the way students are being taught in universities," he said, urging the government to consider ways to produce graduates with these skills.