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RM117,000 grants for 39 Sabah, Labuan students

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Cynthia D Baga

KOTA KINABALU: Thirty-nine students from Sabah and Labuan received cash grants totalling RM117,000 after completing a three-month financial literacy programme designed to educate the younger generation on managing their finances.

Each participant received a RM3,000 grant, disbursed as a BSN Sijil Simpanan Premium (SSP) and redeemable after 45 days, upon completing the Fun(d) for Life Uni Edition (FFL-Uni) programme.

Programme Lead FFL-Uni and Arus Academy Co-Founder, Alina Amir, explained that FFL-Uni is a financial literacy programme by Arus Academy, in collaboration with FWD Insurance and supported by FEN.

"This programme targets post-SPM students aged 18–24, including those in TVET, public and private universities, Form 6, and community colleges across Malaysia. It aims to empower young Malaysians from low-income backgrounds with effective financial management skills and positive financial habits," she said.

This is the second cohort in Sabah. After completing its East Malaysia chapters, the programme will move to the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak for upcoming cohorts, continuing its national reach.

To date, 179 students have graduated from the programme. The 39 graduates from Cohort 3 in Sabah received their grants, while 171 more participants from Cohorts 4 to 6 are still completing the three-month programme, which includes daily financial tracking, monthly coaching sessions, an eight-hour financial literacy community project, and a final assignment.

"Only participants who complete at least 80 per cent of the overall assignments are eligible for the RM3,000 grant provided by FWD Malaysia," Alina said, adding that the grant is not merely a financial reward, but a signal of trust.

Participants are required to complete a three-day financial literacy bootcamp, track daily expenses over three months, attend monthly coaching, execute a community project, and deliver a final presentation.

Alina emphasized that financial literacy is not just about budgeting, but also about understanding the psychology behind financial decisions — why people spend as they do, the emotions driving those choices, and how to reshape those patterns.



The participants during the grant presentation ceremony.

Launched on January 20, 2025, FFL-Uni will continue until 2026 to reach all states in Malaysia. Participants are selected through interviews and closely monitored throughout the programme.

"We are not interested in one-day awareness. We want to see real behavioural change, which takes time, accountability, and community," Alina added.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) student Rosita Bonai, 22, said the three months in FFL-Uni marked a fundamental shift in her thinking about money.

"The biggest change in me is how I spend. I used to spend wastefully without considering my true needs. Now I prioritise needs and savings. I also realised that money itself does not define a person—it is how we manage it that shapes our future," she said.

Her fellow UMS student, Mohammad Azemmy Iqwan Albert @ Robert, 21, described the programme as "more than a financial course. FFL-Uni is a learning journey that changed how we manage, see, and plan our financial future."

A key feature of FFL-Uni is its community project component, where participants design and implement a financial literacy initiative for a group of their choosing.

One notable project came from Frederick Mandul, 22, a UMS student from Kampung Liu, Pitas. He designed SMART WANG, an eight-hour programme structured around five pillars: financial skills, mindset, practice, financial reality, and habits.

Frederick brought the programme back to his village, targeting 20 participants aged 12 to 25, including secondary school students and young adults.

His goal was to show rural youth that continuing their education is achievable and that financial barriers can be overcome with the right knowledge.

He discovered that 85 per cent of local youth were disinterested in further education due to financial constraints and a lack of awareness about scholarships and aid.