STUDENTS from at least one private school want more recognition from employers.

They said that they felt discriminated by bosses who did not value them as highly as their peers from Singapore's mainstream universities.

This was one of the hot-button issues that emerged yesterday during an Our Singapore Conversation dialogue attended by about 40 PSB Academy students.

The students also raised the need for government subsidies to be extended to Singaporeans studying in private schools and for more support from employers of those who are studying part-time.

Only SIM University (UniSIM), Lasalle College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts have government subsidies. At UniSIM, Singaporeans doing part-time undergraduate studies receive a 55 per cent tuition fee subsidy. Students at mainstream universities get more than 70 per cent.

The session – which was organised by Tanglin-Cairnhill Citizens' Consultative Committee and PSB Academy – aimed to delve into four issues affecting students who go private. At the end of last year, there were about 227,000 of them enrolled in some 332 schools.

After being divided into four discussion groups, the participants spent more than two hours talking about topics, including the challenges faced when upgrading academic qualifications and policies that may help those in higher education.

Ms Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State for Education and Law, moved from group to group listening in on the discussions. Later, she took questions from the students.

She told reporters, “The suggestions and concerns will be raised with the Ministry of Education and the Council for Private Education.

“They are people who have not had the opportunity to have the kind of certification or degree qualification that they would have liked to have in the first place. They have decided somewhere along the line to make an attempt at it, and that part is laudable...and should be encouraged.”

Ms Nurul Alfiah, a 21-year-old pursuing a chemistry degree at PSB Academy, said she hopes the authorities will look into providing subsidies for students in private education. “If there are subsidies available, perhaps many of us would not need to juggle both work and study,” said the lab assistant.