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Employers are on the hunt for skills beyond academic grades in job candidates, said two head honchos at tech firms Google and LinkedIn.

Responding to a student who asked at a forum how skills can be measured aside from looking at grades, Mr Ben King, Google's country manager for Singapore, said the company looks for attributes apart from what job applicants may have studied or knowledge related to the roles they are applying for.

A university degree is not required for almost any role at Google, he added.

Rather, the company looks at things like problem-solving skills, leadership traits and the willingness to challenge the status quo.

Mr Frank Koo, LinkedIn's head of Asia, talent and learning solutions, said 40 per cent of hirers globally use skills data when recruiting on LinkedIn.

Mr King and Mr Koo were panellists at The Straits Times Education Forum held on Saturday at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

Questions during the two-hour session ranged from the role of edtech and ChatGPT to how institutions can better collaborate, and the latest A-level scoring changes.

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing and SMU provost Timothy Clark were also on the panel, which was moderated by SMU's professor emeritus of finance (practice) Annie Koh.

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Professor Clark said SMU will launch a co-curricular transcript in April to help students indicate to employers the skills they have learnt outside the classroom.

The challenge for students, said Mr Chan, is to find their interests and distinguish themselves in a world where everyone's grade point averages are similar.

The panellists also delved into the skills needed in the growing field of sustainability.

Mr King said Google searches for "sustainability" in Singapore reached an all-time high in 2022.

The country was also among the top three in the world searching on Google for environmental, social and corporate governance in the past 12 months.

At LinkedIn, Mr Koo said there are currently more than 1,500 jobs in Singapore requiring green skills listed on the networking platform.

But there is a skills gap, he added, as global job postings requiring green skills have grown at a rate of about 8 per cent annually since 2015, while the share of green talent grew at about 6 per cent each year in the same period.

Prof Clark said SMU will require all students to have a foundational understanding of sustainability issues from academic year 2023.

In 2024, all incoming undergraduates will need to attain an intermediate mastery of sustainability before graduation.

"Our intention... is that every student who leaves the university has a range of relevant skills for the future economy," he said.

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