



## The Philippines: Education system and quality assurance

14 November 2023

Danish National ID Centre

Birkerød Kongevej 2  
DK-3460 Birkerød  
Denmark

Phone +45 61 98 39 00  
Email [nidc@nidc.dk](mailto:nidc@nidc.dk)  
Website [www.nidc.dk](http://www.nidc.dk)

### *Introduction*

The following note introduces the education system of the Philippines with a special focus on the role of quality assurance and verification possibilities. It will provide a description of the current higher education system and elaborate on the role of both institutional and programme recognition as well as accreditation in the Philippines. Additionally a description of regulated professions is presented.

This note is based primarily on information obtained during a fact-finding mission to the Philippines in September 2023 as well as open source information.

### *Education system in the Philippines*

In the Philippines, school education is comprised of 13 years of compulsory education made up of one year of kindergarten, six years of elementary education and six years of secondary education.<sup>1</sup> Since 2012, kindergarten became a requirement for all Philippine children of five years of age. Prior to this only elementary education was compulsory and basic education lasted 10 years.<sup>2</sup> The Department of Education (DepEd) oversees the school system.<sup>3</sup>

Following elementary education students can continue to secondary education within technical and vocational education programs or through junior and senior high school. Vocational education consists of five different exam categories; National Certificate (NC) I-IV and diploma degrees.<sup>4</sup> Completed senior high school qualifications give access to higher education comprised of associate degrees (two years), Bachelor's degrees (four years), first professional degrees (five years), diploma and certificates (offered at higher education institutions, two years), Master's degrees (two years) and doctoral degrees (three years).<sup>5</sup>

The Technical and Skills Development Agency (TESDA) monitors the vocational and technical education in the Philippines while the Commission of Higher Education

<sup>1</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>4</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; TESDA, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>5</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

(CHED) oversees the higher education programmes and institutions. Both private and public institutions offer vocational and higher education programmes and the main language of instruction within vocational and higher education programs is English.<sup>6</sup>

According to both CHED and TESDA, it is common practise in the Philippines that students following graduation within the higher education system pursue courses and/or certificates in areas within the vocational and technical domain.<sup>7</sup> Moreover CHED clarified that it is possible to complete several bachelor programmes (double degrees) but not simultaneously.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Recognition and accreditation within higher education institutions*

Both higher education institutions and vocational and technical institutions in the Philippines are subject to quality assurance processes from either TESDA or CHED.

In order to ensure quality assurance in higher education in the Philippines, CHED was established in 1994 as part of the Higher Education Act.<sup>9</sup> Higher education institutions are obliged to gain approval from CHED in order to offer academic programmes for the first and second year (permit phase). If the CHED requirements are met, the institution can subsequently apply for recognition (recognition phase), which allows the institution to offer the programme on a continuous basis. Following this, private institutions apply for a Special Order Number to award nationally recognised qualifications (see below section on Special Order Number).<sup>10</sup>

Private higher education institutions with particularly high academic standards and similar quality conditions are granted autonomous or deregulated status by CHED.<sup>11</sup> Each category provides the higher education institutions with specific levels of autonomy. For instance autonomous status institutions are exempted from regular monitoring and requirements for the approval of educational programmes, including new educational programmes.<sup>12</sup>

While the above categories are attainable only for private institutions both public and private institutions can have programmes or departments awarded as either centres of excellence or centres of development.<sup>13</sup> Centre of excellence is granted to a department or programme within an education institution that continuously demonstrates excellent performance in areas such as instruction, research and publication and institutional qualifications while a centre of development is granted for departments or programmes that prove the potential to become a centre of excellence in the future.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>7</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; TESDA, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>8</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>9</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>10</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>11</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023

<sup>12</sup> Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Manila, September 2023; Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>14</sup> CHED, 24 October 2023.

Besides from compulsory CHED recognition, higher education institutions can also apply for accreditation which is performed by private accreditation agencies. The process of accreditation is voluntary.<sup>15</sup>

For a list of CHED recognised education institutions and programmes, see CHED's website (<https://ched.gov.ph/list-of-higher-education-institutions-2/>). Besides from recognised institutions, currently only a list of Master's and doctorate programmes are available on CHED's website, as of November 2023. This is due to a temporary update of the website and CHED has informed that recognised Bachelor's programmes are supposed to be accessible on their website in the future also.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Quality assurance within technical and vocational education*

TESDA was established in 1994 and is responsible for overseeing and accrediting vocational and technical education institutions and programmes. All vocational and technical education institutions must be accredited by TESDA and all programs must be registered. This includes also the programs offered in higher education institutions for which CHED is responsible.<sup>17</sup>

There are two general types of TESDA training programs: 1) programs offered by TESDA-established centres (centre-based programs) and 2) programs offered under the auspices of the traditional academic institutional environment (school based programs). All programs approved by TESDA are at the non-university level, even if offered at a higher education institution.<sup>18</sup>

When an institution has been registered and approved by TESDA, there is a compliance audit done by TESDA after one year and if the institution adheres to the TESDA requirements, audits will be done continuously every second year. If TESDA experience deficiencies at a given institution, the institution will be given 30 days to adhere to the demands and regulations of TESDA. Otherwise, the institution can be closed by TESDA.<sup>19</sup>

For a list of TESDA accredited and recognised education institutions and programmes, see TESDA's website (<https://www.tesda.gov.ph/AboutL/TESDA/26>). Furthermore, it is possible to verify graduates with a National Certificate (NC) or a Certificate of Competence (COC) on the TESDA website under 'Verification and Registry of Certified Workers'. This is only possible for students who passed all exams and graduated. All certificates hold a certificate number unique to the specific student.<sup>20</sup> To look up graduates, the first and last name is needed and the first four

---

<sup>15</sup> Ecctis, 26 October 2023.

<sup>16</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>17</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023; Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet, 26 October 2023.

<sup>18</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023; Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet, 26 October 2023.

<sup>19</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>20</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023.

and last four digits of the Certificate Number.<sup>21</sup> According to TESDA, the website is updated on a regular basis while the list of TESDA programmes and institutions is updated on a yearly basis.<sup>22</sup>

Currently TESDA issues both electronic certificates (E-certificates) and physical certificates to students who graduate. E-certificates are sent via email to the graduated student. Both certificates hold a QR code with basic information on the student. According to TESDA, they will cease to issue physical paper certificates by January 2024.<sup>23</sup>

### *Certification, Authentication and Verification*

In order to certify the legitimacy of education documents, Philippine students can apply for a Certification, Authentication, and Verification (CAV) of academic records.<sup>24</sup> In the Philippines, CAV refers to the official process of reviewing and certifying the genuineness of academic records of a student. The CAV is executed by the relevant education authority (DepEd, CHED or TESDA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), if apostilled.<sup>25</sup>

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

CAV (Region) No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Series of (Year) \_\_\_\_\_

**CERTIFICATION, AUTHENTICATION AND VERIFICATION**

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that based on the records forwarded by the concerned Higher Education Institution, mentioned below:

Name of Student : \_\_\_\_\_

Degree : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Graduation/ : \_\_\_\_\_

Units Earned : \_\_\_\_\_

Special Order No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Institution : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

This is to further certify that the above institution is a duly authorized private higher education institution and that the entries that appear in Transcript of Record and Diploma are authentic copies and the signatures appearing are those of the President and other authorities of the said institution.

This certification must not be honored if the copies of the student's Transcript of Record and Diploma presented are not duly authenticated/certified by the School Registrar.

Issued upon the request of Mr/Ms. (Last Name of Applicant) for whatever legal purpose it may serve.

For the Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Signatory \_\_\_\_\_

NOT VALID WITHOUT CHED SEAL OR  
WITH ERASURE OR ALTERATION

Processed by : \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by : \_\_\_\_\_

OR No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Date Issued : \_\_\_\_\_

Amount : \_\_\_\_\_



**Image 1:** CHED CAV template (NIDC reference material).

<sup>21</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023; TESDA, 30 October 2023.

<sup>22</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>23</sup> TESDA, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>24</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>25</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

The process of CAV varies from each institution and the relevant education authority. However, the process generally follows the steps below:

- To initiate the process of CAV, a student must file an application form with attached certified copies of the relevant educational documents (diplomas, transcripts, certificates etc.) and forward to the relevant office at the issuing education institution.<sup>26</sup>
- Following this, the relevant education institution verifies the education documents and forwards a CAV request to the competent education authority who then issues the CAV physically to the applicant.<sup>27</sup> All private universities use a standard format for the CAV, while state universities use institution specific formats.<sup>28</sup>
- In order to get a DFA authentication (Apostille) the CAV issued by the relevant education authority is forwarded to the DFA, who verifies the education documents and issues the Apostille to the applicant.<sup>29</sup>

For more information on the CAV and the Apostille performed by the DFA, see the NIDC note *The Philippines: Legalisation and Apostille*.

According to CHED, an electronic CAV (E-CAV) is under development. CHED expects it to be implemented during 2024. When implemented, students will be able to apply online and receive the CAV online as well.<sup>30</sup> Currently the cost of CHED issuing a CAV is 80 pesos and the process normally takes seven working days after the student has submitted all necessary documents to CHED. CAV's issued by CHED have no validity period and is printed on security paper.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Special Order Number (SO Number)*

In general, private higher education institutions must ask permission from the CHED to allow students to graduate. When doing so, the higher education institutions receive a Special Order Number (SO Number) unique to the specific student. The SO Number appears on the transcript and/or diploma and on the CAV, if the student has applied for such.<sup>32</sup> Autonomous and deregulated private higher education institutions, public education institutions and programmes already accredited by external agencies, are however exempted from applying for SO numbers.<sup>33</sup> If institutions are exempted from applying for SO numbers, it is stated explicitly on the transcripts and/or diplomas.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>27</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila, September 2023; CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, Manila, September 2023; CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>30</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>31</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>32</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; NUFFIC, 31 October 2023.

<sup>33</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Manila, September 2023; NUFFIC, 31 October 2023.

<sup>34</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023; NUFFIC, 31 October 2023.

The SO Number always consists of 12 digits and the below exemplifies the build-up of the number:

Sample SO Number: 50-341101-0708.

- The first two digits: Refer to the education level (e.g. Bachelor's degree=50, Two-year degree programme=40, Postgraduate degree=80).
- Digit three to five: Constitute the specific programme code (e.g. a specific bachelor programme).
- Digits six to twelve: Indicate a unique control number.<sup>35</sup>

A student has to comply with all requirements and complete all necessary exams before CHED offices can issue the SO Number. It takes CHED approximately three months to process the SO Number.<sup>36</sup>

### *Regulated professions*

The Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is the regulatory agency under the department of labour responsible for regulated professions in the Philippines. PRC has offices in all regions of the Philippines.<sup>37</sup>

There are 46 regulated professions in the Philippines including i.e. doctors, nurses, engineers and educators.<sup>38</sup> The responsibility of the PRC is mainly to monitor and assess whether a certain individual is capable of practising a profession or not. The PRC carries out exams and is responsible for renewals and license issuance.<sup>39</sup>

The process of PRC regulated exams is:

- When a student complies with all of the requirements and has the required documents (diploma, birth certificate etc.), the student can schedule for a PRC exam online. There are no time limits for taking the exams.
- Smaller programmes have exams once a year, regular size professions do exams twice a year while larger professions such as nurses have exams three times a year.
- If the student passes the relevant exam, the student will have to upload the required documents stating the results online including a photo of the applicant.
- Then the regional office will schedule an appointment for the student to make the initial registration.
- The student's documents are verified by the school and sanctioned by CHED.
- When the student show up physically to register at a regional PRC office, a Professional ID card is issued shortly after the registration.

---

<sup>35</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>36</sup> CHED, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>37</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>38</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>39</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

- A Certificate of Registration is sent by mail or available for pick up at the relevant regional office. This can take up to a month to process.<sup>40</sup>

As indicated in the above, a student who passes the relevant exam needs to get the two following documents; a Certificate of Registration and a Professional ID card.

The Certificate of Registration does not expire and bears signatures from all members of the board responsible for the specific profession. All registration certificates look identical regardless of the profession. The only difference is the specific logo indicating the profession i.e. health, technology or business. A photo of the applicant is printed on the document and the certificate holds a sequence number unique to the student (the sequence number is equal to the license number on the Professional ID card).<sup>41</sup>

The Professional ID card has a validity period of three years. In order to work within the employment areas of regulated professions, it is mandatory to have a valid Professional ID card.<sup>42</sup> For renewal of the Professional ID card, the holder will have to apply online and choose a venue and the PRC system will schedule an appointment where the new Professional ID card will be issued to the applicant. The Professional ID card holds a picture of the applicant, a QR code and a unique license number. The QR code on the ID card contains information of the profession and basic information of the applicant.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible to verify licenses by entering either name and profession or license numbers on the PRC website (<https://online.prc.gov.ph/Verification>). The online verification database indicates whether the license is either 'valid' or 'expired'.

---

<sup>40</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>41</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>42</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

<sup>43</sup> PRC, Manila, September 2023.

## References

### *Oral sources*

Central Luzon State University (CLSU), (September 2023): Interviewed in Manila, the Philippines.

Commission on Higher Education (CHED), (September 2023): Interviewed in Manila, the Philippines.

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), (September 2023): Interviewed in Manila, the Philippines.

Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), (September 2023): Interviewed in Manila, the Philippines.

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) (September 2023): Interviewed in Manila, the Philippines.

### *Written sources*

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (24 October 2023): Centres of Excellence and Centres of Development (COES&CODS): <https://ched.gov.ph/centers-excellence-centers-developmentcoescods/>, retrieved 24 October 2023.

Ecctis (26 October 2023): Philippine Country File: <https://www.ecctis.com/product/International%20Comparisons/information.aspx?CountryID=130&TextID=172>, retrieved 6 October 2023.

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) (30 October 2023): REGISTRY OF CERTIFIED WORKERS: <https://www.tesda.gov.ph/Rwac/Rwac2017>, retrieved 30 October 2023.

The Dutch organisation for international education (NUFFIC) (31 October 2023): <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/education-systems/philippines/higher-education>, retrieved 31 October 2023.

Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet (26 October 2023): Landehåndbogen – Filippinerne: <https://ufm.dk/uddannelse/anerkendelse-og-dokumentation/find-vurderinger/landehaandbogen/slaa-op>, retrieved 26 October 2023.