

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

# Philippines



## Policy Frameworks

**Does equity with regard to supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education feature in any government produced policy documents? If so, which government policy document(s) are these and can you provide website link(s) to them?**

Yes. In higher education particularly for the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), its mission as an agency is “to promote equitable access and ensure quality and relevance of higher education institutions and their programs.” Further to this, CHED is mandated to “ensure that quality higher education is accessible to all who seek it particularly those who may not be able to afford it”. Funding support for access and equity are available both for the students, higher education teachers and higher education institutions (HEIs).

For more information, visit the Commission on Higher Education’s website at <https://ched.gov.ph/>.

**What policies and actions are described in these government policy documents in terms of supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education?**

Policies, standards and guidelines including programs and projects in CHED related to equity are the following:

- ➔ Indigenous Education Policy: <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/CMO-No.-02-Integration-of-Indigenous-peoples-studies-into-the-relevant-Higher-Education-Curricula.pdf>
- ➔ Expanded Tertiary Education, Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP): <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-54-s.-2016.pdf>
- ➔ Student Admission to Private Higher Education Under the Guidelines for Private HEIs (P. 32-35): <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-No.40-s2008.pdf>
- ➔ Scholarship Programs (Financial Assistance, Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education or Unifast) (P. 12-15): <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Higher-Education-Accomplishments-2010-2016.pdf>
- ➔ For students with special needs:
  - 📄 E.1. CMO NO. 23, S. 2000 “Quality Education for Learners With Special Needs”: <http://116.50.242.167/nlpdl/CH01/MO/2000/CHOM00023s2000.pdf>
  - 📄 E.2. CHED Guidelines in Admission of PwDs: <https://pdfslide.net/documents/ched-guidelines-in-admission-of-pwds-090826.html>

**Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education? If so, which document(s) is/are these? Can you provide a link(s)?**

The governmental support through CHED basically aimed at providing financial support and assistance to the marginalized and deserving learners who would like to pursue college education. Some mechanisms like ETEEAP in education and special education, target specific learners and form part of advocacies in higher education. With regards to scholarships, CHED reports the following:

“At the start of A.Y. 2010-2011, the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education was 31% which was already well above the average for developing countries. Nonetheless, the participation rate among the lowest quintile of the population was noticeably low. Thus, CHED provided three types of student financial assistance programs (STUFAPS) for poor but deserving students, namely: 1) scholarships (merit-based); 2) grants in-aid (need-based); and 3) student loans. Prior to 2010, the CHED system of student financial aid

could only provide for 55,134 beneficiaries amounting to php714 million. This figure represented 2% of the total higher education enrolment of 2.95 million at that time. It also indicated that the system had low coverage relative to need and was not well-targeted towards poor students. In the last six years, CHED has improved and expanded the implementation of the various STUFAPS, launched a program targeted for the poorest of the poor, and designed and advocated an integrated and more efficient system of scholarships, grants-in-aid and loans. Funding for STUFAPS has significantly increased, reaching php5.65 billion in A.Y. 2015-2016 and benefiting 289,045 students nationwide.” (Commission on Higher Education. “Advancing a Locally Responsive and Globally Competitive Philippine Higher Education System Higher Education”. Accomplishments, 2010-2016)

**Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents? (Please choose as many groups as apply in your own country)**

- ➔ Low-income or lower socio-economic background students (scholarships)
- ➔ Older or mature learners (ETEAAP)
- ➔ Indigenous populations (indigenous education in the curriculum)
- ➔ Students with disability (special education)
- ➔ Victims of sexual and gender violence (CHED memorandum order (CMO) No. 01, series of 2015 or the “establishing the policies and guidelines on gender and development in CHED and HEIs.”)

**Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups in higher education?**

Higher education in the country is guaranteed regardless of status, religion, gender, etcetera. Learners who aspire to finish their undergraduate degrees are supported through enabling policies similar or as stated herein.

**Which agency has responsibility for policies related to equity in student participation/success in higher education?**

CHED, together with HEIs, both public and privately funded are responsible for the policies and implementation with regard to equity in education.

**Which stakeholder groups are consulted during the equity policy formulation? (Please choose all the stakeholders that are invited to the consultation process in your own country)**

- ➔ Higher education institutions’ associations
- ➔ Civil society organisations
- ➔ Private sector organisations

## Achieving Policy Targets

**Are there any non-monetary instruments such as outreach work between schools and universities, reforms to university admission etc. used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?**

Given the nature of higher education in the Philippines, endeavours on promoting access/equity are usually based according to the institutional policies adopted by the HEIs. It has to be noted that CHED as an education agency sets the minimum standards for the operation of HEIs in the country and respects the academic freedom being enjoyed by these institutions of higher learning. Usually, such endeavours are under extension and linkages- one of the core functions of higher education; the other two are teaching and research.

### **Are there any financial instruments such as bursaries, scholarships and loans used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?**

- ➔ The implementing guidelines for the cash grants to medical students enrolled in state universities and colleges (CGMS-SUCS) are jointly issued by the commission on higher education (CHED) and the department of budget and management (DBM), aims to provide tuition fee subsidy and financial assistance to all medical students enrolled in identified SUCS offering doctor of medicine program.
- ➔ CHED scholarship programs (CSPS) - qualifying and deserving Filipino students shall be given scholarships in accordance with the requirements set forth under CMO NO. 08, S. 2019 entitled “policies and guidelines for CHED scholarship programs (CSPS)”.

### **Who is responsible for monitoring the impact of measures used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education?**

CHED as the implementing agency of the programs and projects stated herein is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation since annual appropriations are coursed through the agency.

### **What instruments, methods and data are in place to carry out the monitoring and evaluation?**

Based on CMO NO. 08, S. 2019, the monitoring of the scholarships shall be done by the CHED central office and regional offices at the end of each semester/terms of every academic year, particularly on the status of the scholar, fund utilization and distribution of slots.

### **What kind of autonomy do higher education institutions enjoy in reaching the policy targets set by government?**

The autonomy in higher education in the country is reflected in the 1987 Philippine constitution “Academic freedom shall be enjoyed in all institutions of higher learning” Section 5 (2), Article xiv. Aside from the academic freedom enjoyed by HEIs based on the opinion of US Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter (1957): “Who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study”; HEIs especially the private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are awarded with autonomous/deregulated status by CHED upon reaching a set of parameters for quality (see CMO No. 19 S. 2016 “benefits and responsibilities of autonomous and deregulated private higher education institutions”).

For more information, please refer to <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CMO-19-series-of-2016-AD-Benefits-Official.pdf>; <https://up.edu.ph/what-is-academic-freedom-and-why-the-fuss/>

### **How do you see the role of inter-governmental/international organisations in supporting higher education equity policies? In which areas would be their contribution the most valuable? (1= most valuable contribution 4=least valuable contribution)**

1. Policy setting
2. Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)
3. Technical assistance and capacity building
4. Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries

Further information: The role of inter-governmental/international organisations are noteworthy as it impinged upon the local policies, especially if the Philippines as a country is signatory to any bilateral/multilateral agreements. Case in point: the EFA or the “Education For All” policy, which is the basis of inclusion policies and other enabling policies with regard to education in the country. Another one is the Philippines Quality Framework which is the country’s education effort towards the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.

## COVID-19 and Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

### **How, if at all, has Covid-19 affected the existence and implementation of policies designed to encourage greater access and success on higher education of those from low-income/marginalized groups?**

Covid-19 has had a dire effect in all segments of the society, including the education sector. However, despite the pandemic, education in the Philippines continued through various modalities adopted by the HEIs. With regards to scholarships that especially cater to low-income or marginalized, CHED reports that it has reached its target for 2020 despite the situation to wit:

“For the output indicator number of scholarships and student grants awarded, the one-time grant to beneficiaries of the Tabang OFW program and the new scholars under the Tulong Dunong program helped in reaching 134% accomplishment rate. Last September 2020, CHED and the unified student financial assistance system for tertiary education (Unifast) launched the p1b Tabang OFW program to give a one-time educational assistance of p30,000 to dependents of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who were repatriated and could not go back to their overseas work due to the covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the 115% accomplishment rate for the indicator number of faculty members provided with faculty development grants was attributed to both new and continuing local and foreign scholarships.”

### Sources

This country brief was prepared as part of the *“ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education”* report, a collaboration between the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#) and the [National Education Opportunities Network \(NEON\)](#). The report was launched at the [8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARC8\)](#) on *“Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe”* on 10 September 2021.

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