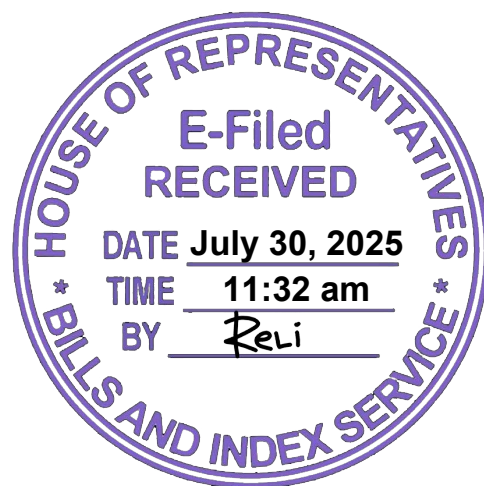


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2612



Introduced by **HON. KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State is mandated to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and shall take appropriate measures to render education accessible to all in accordance to 1987 Constitution.¹ The State shall also establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society² notwithstanding the academic freedom³ provided for in all higher education institutions.

In relation to that, the Philippine higher education underwent major reforms from 2012 to 2021. One of which is the K to 12 law⁴ effectively adding two years to the country's basic education cycle. Initially the rationale for the K to 12 law is to decrease the number of units⁵ or academic load needed to complete the general education (GE) courses. Subjects from GE are placed in the basic education curriculum. This revision of the Philippine education system, specifically the K to 12 program, seeks to provide a more comprehensive education that enhances critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world applications of knowledge.⁶ This is also believed to meet the acceptable college

¹ 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Sec. 1.

² *Id.* at Sec. 2 (1).

³ *Id.* at Sec. 5 (2).

⁴ R.A. No. 10533 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013", July 23, 2012.

⁵ Senate Committee on Education, Arts, and Culture joint with Committee on Ways and Means; Committee on Finance; and Committee on Science and Technology. Public Hearing. Transcript. February 16, 2012

⁶ Enrolled Undergraduate Programs in the Philippines. A Technical Report Commissioned by the Second Congressional Commission on Education of the Philippines (EDCOM II).

readiness standards as prescribed by Commission on Higher Education (CHED)⁷ improving further the global competitiveness of Filipino graduates.

However, GE courses are continuously being required to be taken up on college level such that, overall, bachelor's degree programs in the Philippines remain to be denser as compared to scales from the EU⁸, Australia, and ASEAN⁹. The K to 12 law led to fewer General Education courses at colleges, but the reduction wasn't enough to significantly shorten the overall length of college programs.¹⁰

This measure simplifies the structure of college education by setting the standard duration for a bachelor's degree to no more than three years, unless a longer period is required by law or for licensure purposes. Many countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 adopted this three-year system to make degrees more understandable and comparable across Europe. The goal was to improve student mobility, gain international recognition for qualifications, and make it easier to move from undergraduate to graduate studies.

The majority of signatory countries have adopted the 3+2 model, consisting of three years for a bachelor's degree and two years for a master's degree. This structure is followed by nations such as Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Finland, and the United Kingdom¹¹. Additionally, several non-signatory countries, including Australia¹², India¹³, and New Zealand,¹⁴ have implemented similar educational frameworks.

This legislation allows the CHED to permit degree programs to be completed in less than three years when appropriate, based on industry needs, international standards, and best practices. This helps ensure that college programs stay current with technological and sectoral changes, improving quality and efficiency.

⁷ USAID and RTI International. (2025). A Survey of Programs, Standards and Guidelines (PSGs) of the 10 Most-Enrolled Undergraduate Programs in the Philippines. A Technical Report Commissioned by the Second Congressional Commission on Education of the Philippines (EDCOM II).

⁸ European Union members are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

⁹ ASEAN members include Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

¹⁰ Senate Committee on Basic Education analysis based on the CHED (2024) data.

¹¹ [https://www.u-eei.edu.es/en/Degree-Duration-Countries.shtml#:~:text=3%2Dyears%20Bachelor:%20Belgium%2C%20Finland%2C%20Italy%2C%20France%2C%20Iceland%2C%20Switzerland%2C%20the%20United%20Kingdom.&text=Mixed%20systems%20\(thre%20or%204%2Dyears\):%20Germany%2C%20Austria%2C,Norway%2C%20Poland%2C%20Portugal%2C%20Slovakia%2C%20Slovenia%2C%20and%20Spain](https://www.u-eei.edu.es/en/Degree-Duration-Countries.shtml#:~:text=3%2Dyears%20Bachelor:%20Belgium%2C%20Finland%2C%20Italy%2C%20France%2C%20Iceland%2C%20Switzerland%2C%20the%20United%20Kingdom.&text=Mixed%20systems%20(thre%20or%204%2Dyears):%20Germany%2C%20Austria%2C,Norway%2C%20Poland%2C%20Portugal%2C%20Slovakia%2C%20Slovenia%2C%20and%20Spain)

¹² <https://www.studyaustralia.gov.au/en/plan-your-studies/universities-and-higher-education/undergraduate-qualifications>

¹³ <https://iee.com/blog/assessing-indian-education-degrees/>

¹⁴ <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Qualifications-standards/Understanding-NZQF/NZQF.pdf>

It also upholds the autonomy of educational institutions by limiting CHED's authority to set minimum course requirements only for specific programs and licensing purposes.

By adopting a three-year, specialization-focused college system and including General Education subjects in the K to 12 curriculum, students can concentrate on professional courses that develop advanced skills in their chosen fields. This reform aims to make college education more focused, high-quality, and relevant, while preserving the academic freedom of colleges and universities as guaranteed by the Constitution. I encourage Congress to support and pass this important law quickly.



KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2612

Introduced by **HON. KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN**

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR A THREE-YEAR SPECIALIZATION-FOCUSED COLLEGE
EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AND AUTHORIZING THE COMMISSION
ON HIGHER EDUCATION TO ALLOW FLEXIBILITY TO REDUCE COLLEGE
ACADEMIC YEARS

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Three-Year College Education (3CE) Act.*”

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education that promotes accessible, efficient, and high-quality college education that is relevant to the needs of the people and society.

Towards this end, the State shall ensure that college education focuses on immediate specialization in the students’ chosen fields of study, following the completion of general education courses at the basic education level, without infringing on the academic freedom of higher education institutions.

Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

a. *Bachelor’s Degree* shall refer to the undergraduate academic degree conferred by a higher education institution upon completing coursework, typically over a span of three to six years, depending on the field of study and condition of students.

b. *General Education* shall refer to the component of the curriculum oriented towards broad or wide-ranging understandings and exposes students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities, developing in the process intellectual competencies such as critical, analytical and creative thinking, and multiple forms of expression; and civic capacities demanded of membership in the community, country, and the world.

c. *General Education Courses* shall refer to the courses that aim to enhance intellectual competencies, personal and civil responsibilities, and practical skills. It shall include both core courses and elective courses, which may be taught either in English or Filipino.

d. *Higher Education Institution* shall refer to an institution of higher learning, primarily offering bachelor and advanced degree programs.

e. *Professional Courses* shall refer to the specific courses prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) required for licensure purposes. As distinguished from general education courses, professional courses focus on a particular discipline and are directed at more theoretical and technical knowledge.

Sec. 4. *Nominal Duration of Bachelor's Degrees.* – The nominal duration of any bachelor's degree program offered by higher education institutions shall not exceed three (3) academic years, except as otherwise provided by law mandating a longer duration or additional requisites for licensure purposes.

The CHED shall be authorized to allow flexibility for the degree programs to be completed in less than three (3) academic years, where appropriate: *Provided*, that the duration of such degree programs shall be determined based on assessed industry needs, international standards or benchmarks, and recognized best practices relevant to the specific degree program.

The college academic years shall be devoted exclusively to professional courses aimed at developing advanced competencies in the student's chosen field of study. Further, the CHED, in consultation with the PRC, shall issue guidelines for the recognition and structuring of applicable exceptions.

Sec. 5. *Removal of General Education Courses in the College Curriculum.* – General education courses shall not be required for the completion of the requirements of any bachelor's degree in higher education institutions.

All requisite general education courses, including those in communication, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics, shall be integrated and completed within the Senior High School (SHS) Program under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum.

The CHED, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), shall ensure the alignment of the SHS curriculum with the knowledge base required for specialization at the college level to foster critical thinking and ensure college readiness of students, provide more time for internship and advanced specialization in higher education, enhance the overall efficiency and quality of higher learning, and avoid remedial and duplication of basic education subjects, consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 10533 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013".

Sec. 6. *Guarantee of Academic Freedom.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as limiting the academic freedom of higher education institutions. In particular, no abridgment of curricular freedom of the individual educational institutions by the CHED shall be made except for setting the minimum unit requirements for specific academic programs and professional

courses as may be stipulated by the various licensing entities. Further, no academic or curricular restriction shall be made upon private higher education institutions which are not similarly imposed on chartered state universities and colleges.

Sec. 7. *Transitory Provision.* – The DepEd and higher education institutions shall be given a transition period of three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act to redesign and implement their respective curricula in accordance herewith.

Sec. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, in coordination with the DepEd and the PRC, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation. The rules and regulations issued pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Sec. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 7722 or the “Higher Education Act of 1994”, and all other laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

Sec. 11. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,