



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 4958

**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A.
Acidre**

AN ACT

**STRENGTHENING THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION,
REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7722,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1994”**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

For three decades, Republic Act No. 7722 or the Higher Education Act of 1994 has served as the foundational legal framework of our country’s higher education. While its establishment marked a significant step forward, the rapid pace of education reform, a changing global landscape and the need for a paradigm shift towards development and not just oversight necessitate a comprehensive evolution of the system. Recognizing this inflection point for reform, the proposed Higher Education Development and Innovation Act of 2025 is introduced not merely as a repeal of R.A. 7722, but as a strategic and optimistic modernization initiative. This measure effectively shifts our Philippine higher education foundation from a focus on regulatory oversight, to a more

development-oriented and progressive system. Its key features include the following:

Enhanced governance and financial accountability. The Act strengthens CHED's institutional capacity by consolidating its quasi-judicial powers to efficiently resolve disputes and enforce standards regarding the opening, closure, and maintenance of HEIs and programs.¹ Simultaneously, it reinforces the Higher Education Development Fund, clearly identifying funding sources and establishing an independent Fund Office to ensure the sound, transparent, and equitable utilization of resources for system-wide strengthening across all regions.²

Dedicated investment in faculty development and system reform. The bill establishes a crucial Faculty Development Fund, securing no less than five percent (5%) of CHED's annual appropriations for scholarships, grants, and training to upgrade the credentials and skills of faculty and administrators.³ It also creates an Office for Higher Education Development to spearhead institutional and program support, facilitate international collaboration, and promote non-traditional pathways such as Ladderized Education and Micro-Credentials, ensuring the system is flexible and aligned with industry needs.⁴

Typology-based system and differentiated autonomy. *Typology* provides an organized system of classifying institutions based on their shared characteristics and program offerings, allowing policies and resources to be

¹ Sec. 13

² Sec. 14

³ Sec. 16

⁴ Sec. 17

tailored to their distinct roles within the system.⁵ Complementing this is the concept of *Differentiated Autonomy*, which grants progressively greater self-governance to HEIs that consistently demonstrate quality, accountability, and relevance.⁶ While typology ensures that regulation and support are appropriate to the kind of institution, differentiated autonomy rewards institutional performance and maturity with streamlined oversight and greater freedom to innovate.

Together, these reforms establish a modern, coherent, and future-ready higher education system that equips the Philippines to meet both domestic needs and global challenges.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.

⁵ Sec. 3[w]

⁶ Sec. 3[f]; Sec. 9 [II][g]



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*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 "Higher Education Development and Innovation Act of 2025."

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - The State shall protect, foster and promote the right of all citizens to affordable quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to ensure that education shall be accessible to all. The State shall likewise ensure and protect academic freedom and shall promote its exercise and observance for continuing intellectual growth, advancement of learning and

research, development of responsible and effective leadership, education of high-level professionals, and enrichment of our historical and cultural heritage.

State-supported institutions of higher learning shall gear their programs towards national, regional or local development plans. The State shall prioritize the development and growth of its higher education institutions and consolidate efforts through a whole-of-government approach for quality and impactful tertiary education. The State shall ensure holistic, progressive and functional development of the higher education system by prioritizing equitable access to quality education, targeted expansion of research and development, as well as locally responsive and relevant programs and extension initiatives.

Moreover, the State shall ensure that institutions of higher learning collaborate with relevant public and private stakeholders for a progressive and development-oriented future for the Filipino people.

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

- a. Applied Bachelor's Degree** – refers to a generally four-year degree program that combines academic learning with a substantial proportion of practical or on-the-job experience, targeted for specific career paths, instead of academic or research-focused outcomes;
- b. Associate Degree** – refers to post-secondary qualifications attained after completion of the K to 12 basic education program, normally requiring a minimum of two years of study. It equips learners with specialized skills for gainful employment in related professions, while also providing the academic preparation necessary for progression to baccalaureate programs;
- c. Bachelor's Degree Program** – refers to an undergraduate university degree that requires the completion of a secondary-level education

and involves four (4) years of full-time study for most programs, consisting of general education courses and specialized subjects focused on a major degree;

- d. Commission En Banc** – refers to the policy-making body of the Commission on Higher Education composed of the Chairperson and Commissioners exercising their power and functions under the mandates prescribed by this Act;
- e. Diploma** – refers to a credential awarded after completing a compressed and technically-focused program, specializing in a particular trade or vocational skill, and corresponds to a Level 5 qualification in the PQF framework;
- f. Differentiated Autonomy** – refers to a system of granting increasing levels of self-governance to higher education institutions (HEIs) that consistently meet national standards on quality, accountability, and relevance, allowing such HEIs to be subject to streamlined approvals, and to receive differentiated supports and incentives;
- g. Doctoral Degree** – refers to the highest academic degree, earned by conducting significant research and producing original work, typically in a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or a practice-based professional doctorate;
- h. Foreign Higher Education Institutions** – refer to a foreign-owned and duly recognized higher education institutions abiding by a prescribed system of education duly registered in a country other than the Philippines;
- i. Higher Education Institution (HEI)** – refers to an educational institution, whether private or public undertaking operations of higher education programs recognized by the Commission on Higher

Education, and whose primary offering is higher education, vis-a-vis their basic education and TVET courses and enrolment;

- j. Local Universities and Colleges** – refer to public HEIs established and financially supported by their respective local governments;
- k. Ladderized Education** – refers to the harmonization of all education and training mechanisms that allow students and workers to progress between technical-vocational and higher education programs, or vice-versa. It opens opportunities for career and educational advancement to students and workers. It creates a seamless and borderless education and training system that will allow transfers in terms of flexible entry and exit between technical-vocational and higher education programs in the post-secondary school educational system;
- l. Masteral Degree Program** – refers to a postgraduate academic program that provides advanced and specialized knowledge and skills beyond a bachelor's degree;
- m. Micro-Credentials** – refers to industry-recognized and/or qualification-related skill-specific training and certification shorter in coverage compared to a full qualification or TESDA-prescribed cluster units of competency wherein the curriculum of a micro-credential course does not require the inclusion of basic and common competencies;
- n. Non-degree program** – refers to a postsecondary short-term certificate course program that does not correspond to a specific PQF qualification grade, but may form parts thereof in the case of stackable credentials;
- o. Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF)** – refers to the national policy that describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets standards for learning outcomes across all education and

training sectors in the Philippines, namely basic education, technical-vocational education and training (TVET), higher education, and post-graduate scale of completion;

p. Polytechnic College or Technological College – refers to a college that offers the following:

- i. at least three (3) or more programs that grant or award NC levels 4-5 in TESDA's National Competency Assessment scale, that provide pathways towards bachelor's degree programs offered by the same institution;
- ii. three (3) or more ladderized and/or applied bachelor's degree programs, and
- iii. highly-specialized or technical industry on-the-job training for all of its offered programs;

q. Polytechnic Institute or Technological Institute – refers to post-secondary education institutions with a focused and technical industry-driven curricula, that offer at least three (3) or more programs that grant or award National Certificates (NC) to qualified recipients, with a corresponding diploma or similar credential and an established on-the-job training program;

r. Polytechnic University or Technological University refers to a university that offers the following:

- i. All of the cited qualifications for a polytechnic or technological college;
- ii. Three (3) or more masteral or doctoral programs in applied fields including but not limited to highly technical or technologically-focused professions such as engineering or other applied sciences; and

- iii. an expansive and direct linkage of its degree programs to practical engagements with applicable industries;
- s. **State Universities and Colleges** – refer to public HEIs with independent and separate governing boards created and established by law;
- t. **Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** – refers to the education or training process where it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life and social life, comprises formal (organized programs as part of the school system) and non-formal (organized classes outside the school system) approaches;
- u. **Tertiary Education** – refers to formal post-secondary programs offered by degree-granting colleges, universities, and diplomas offered by TVIs. It shall encompass both higher education and TVET;
- v. **TVET Institute or TVI** – refer to postsecondary education institutions that offer short-term nondegree, diploma or certificate technical-vocational education and training programs or courses; and
- w. **Typology** – an organized system for classifying and categorizing institutions, students, educational programs, or even teaching strategies based on shared characteristics and traits to facilitate analysis, comparison, and understanding of the complexities within the higher education system.

SEC. 4. *Commission on Higher Education.* – In pursuance of the abovementioned policies, the Commission on Higher Education, hereinafter referred to as the Commission, created under Republic Act No. 7722, otherwise known as the Higher Education Act of 1994, shall continue in the exercise of its powers and functions in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

The Commission is independent and separate from the Department of Education (DepEd) and attached to the Office of the President for administrative purposes only. Its coverage shall include both public and private HEIs as well as institutions that offer degree-granting programs in all post-secondary educational institutions, public and private, *Provided*, that for institutions, colleges or universities that offer Associate Degrees, Diploma Programs and Non-Degree Programs, TESDA shall maintain authority, oversight and jurisdiction pursuant to Republic Act No. 7796 and other applicable laws, *Provided further*, that institutions designated by law as National Universities shall maintain legislated autonomy, independent of CHED.

The Commission has authority to establish and implement a developmental and regulatory framework on all matters concerning the reasonable supervision and regulation, as well as the development and improvement of quality of HEIs, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9 of this Act. The Commission shall also have authority over foreign HEIs and all other transnational higher education modalities under Republic Act No. 11448 or the Transnational Higher Education Act.

SEC. 5. *Composition of the Commission.* –

- a. **Overall Composition** – The Commission is composed of five (5) full-time members. The President of the Philippines shall appoint a Chairperson of the Commission and four (4) Commissioners, who meet the following qualifications
 - ii. Holders of earned doctorate degrees, defined as Level 8 in the Philippine Qualifications Framework, from a reputable HEI recognized by the Commission;

- iii. Must have been actively engaged in higher education for at least ten (10) years;
- iv. Must not have been candidates for any elective positions in the national or local election immediately preceding their appointment; and
- v. Must be academics known for their high degree of professionalism and integrity, who have distinguished themselves as authorities in their chosen fields of learning.

To ensure that the diversity of higher education institutions and concerned are reflected in the discussions of the Commission, the appointment of CHED Commissioners be made in consideration of the diversity of academic specializations, and the representation of public and private education concerns, and within public, the concerns of State Universities and Colleges, and Local Universities and Colleges.

Said Commissioners shall take an active part in the work of CHED and shall work closely with the offices of the Commission in ensuring the fulfilment of the aims of this law. To this end, Commissioners shall be designated as oversight for specific functions of CHED, as follows:

- 1. Research, Innovation, and Internationalization;
- 2. Quality Assurance and Standards;
- 3. Student Affairs and Development; and
- 4. Special Concerns

The Commission shall develop a specialized portfolio of policy formulation, development and oversight for each Commissioner and their respective functions, in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 6. *Term of Office.* – The President shall appoint the full-time Chairperson and Commissioners for a term of four (4) years, without prejudice to one (1) reappointment.

The Chairperson and Commissioners shall hold office until their successors shall have been appointed and qualified. In case a member of the Commission fails to complete a term, the successor shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines for a full four-year term without prejudice to one (1) reappointment. In case of a re-appointee, time served in an acting or hold-over capacity shall be counted as part of the new four-year term.

SEC. 7. *Rank and Emoluments.* – The Chairperson shall have the rank and emoluments of a Department Secretary. The Commissioners shall have the equivalent rank of an Undersecretary. They are entitled to receive the compensation and other emoluments corresponding to their positions and shall be subject to the same disqualifications. Consistent with the provisions of Executive Order No. 292, otherwise known as the “Revised Administrative Code of 1987,” they are likewise allowed to receive honoraria and other benefits, subject to existing rules and regulations prescribed by the Commission on Audit.

SEC. 8. *Board of Advisers.* – There shall be constituted a Board of Advisers which shall meet with the Commission at least once a year to assist it in aligning its policies and plans with National Development Goals, and other applicable development plans of the government.

The Board of Advisers shall be composed of the following:

- a. the Secretary of Education as chairman;
- b. the Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning and Development, as co-chairman;
- c. the Secretary of Science and Technology;

- d. the Secretary of Trade and Industry;
- e. the Secretary of Labor and Employment;
- f. the Director-General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority;
- g. the Chairperson of the Philippine Regulatory Commission;

Two (2) additional members of the Board of Advisers may be appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Commission.

SEC. 9. *Powers and Functions of the Commission.* – The Commission shall exercise the following powers and functions:

I. Developmental Powers and Functions:

- a. Formulate, recommend, and implement development plans, policies, priorities, and programs on higher education and research consistent with national and regional development goals, as well as local and global human resource requirements;
- b. Collaborate closely with DepEd and TESDA to ensure that higher education directions and priorities are coherent with, respond to, and support, the needs and developments in basic education and technical vocational education and training;
- c. Work with TESDA and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to ensure that policies and programs relating to the the development of professionals are aligned and responsive to the needs of respective professions as well as national development;
- d. Broaden access to quality higher education through programs and services, particularly for the disadvantaged students, such as indigenous peoples, poor and deserving students, and students from depressed areas, while guaranteeing systems that ensure equitable access for the most underprivileged students as beneficiaries, and

establishing policies that support their completion and graduation from their respective programs;

- e. Formulate differentiated levels of regulation, resourcing, excellence, and developmental supports cognizant of the typology of tertiary education institutions in the country;
- f. Direct the development and reform of higher education towards world class standards, harmonization with the ASEAN education plan, and international conventions and agreements;
- g. Work towards broad recognition of Philippine higher education qualifications and credentials globally, with a special focus on countries that receive many of our college graduates;
- h. Support the development of non-traditional higher education programs and delivery modes, including but not limited to distance education pursuant to Republic Act No. 10650 otherwise known as the Open Distance Learning Act; ladderized education in accordance with Republic Act No. 10647, otherwise known as the Ladderized Education Act of 2014; and the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) as institutionalized under Republic Act No. 12124, together with applicable executive orders and issuances, while ensuring inclusiveness of pathways from basic education;
- i. Fulfill the mandates of CHED under Republic Act No. 11448, otherwise known as the Transnational Higher Education Act, including the establishment of transnational higher education programs, and the internationalization of higher education in the country;
- j. Support the implementation of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) for higher education, pursuant to Republic Act

No. 10968, in coordination with DepEd, TESDA, and other relevant agencies;

- k. Develop and implement standards and systems on reclassification, promotion, and professional development of personnel in state universities and colleges (SUCs), in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC);
- l. Formulate and promulgate rules, regulations, policies, priorities, and programs necessary to effectively carry out the purposes of this Act; and
- m. Perform such other functions as may be necessary for its effective operations and for the continued enhancement, growth, and development of higher education.

II. Oversight and Regulatory Powers and Functions:

- a. Exercise quasi-judicial powers in the pursuit of the Commission's mandate, subject to the provisions of Section 13 of this Act, as well as the following related powers:
 - i. Establishment and enforcement of systems to ensure program and institutional compliance with CHED policies, standards, and guidelines, and;
 - ii. Imposition of appropriate sanctions, after due process, on non-compliant programs or institutions;
- b. Review, evaluate, and recommend to the DBM, based on higher education sector priorities, the budgets of SUCs, and coordinate with the DBM on guidelines for the use of their income;
- c. Set guidelines for reasonable increases in tuition and other fees in private HEIs, and approve, disapprove, or modify applications for

such increases, ensuring equitable access to education and financial sustainability of institutions;

- d. Set standards, policies, and guidelines for the creation, conversion, or elevation of higher education institutions, subject to budgetary limitations and rationalization of institutional distribution across regions;
- e. Provide directions and common standards for accrediting agencies, as well as support the development of accreditation bodies and the participation of HEIs therein as a means of upgrading higher education quality;
- f. Conduct mediation, conciliation, or settlement proceedings, and exercise appellate jurisdiction over disputes involving HEIs, students, teachers, and staff on academic matters; and
- g. Institutionalize and assess a system of differentiated autonomy for HEIs, enabling qualified institutions to enjoy streamlined supervision while ensuring quality assurance.

SEC. 10. *Secretariat and the Executive Director.* – The Commission shall organize a Secretariat which shall be headed by an Executive Director IV, subject to the national compensation and position classification plan, who shall be assisted by two (2) Deputy Executive Directors.

The Commission shall fix the Secretariat's staffing pattern, determine the duties, qualifications, responsibilities and functions, as well as the compensation scheme for the positions to be created upon the recommendation of the executive director. It shall also prepare and approve its budget.

The Executive Director must have at least five (5) years administrative or technical experience in the areas of policies and standards development, management, public or private administration and policy, as well as human

resource development, among others, with the rank and emoluments of an Assistant Secretary to be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

SEC. 11. *Central Office Operation.* – The Commission shall establish central offices in accordance with the Revised Administrative Code of 1987 and other pertinent laws and issuances to support the fulfillment of the powers and functions of the Commission at the national level. The offices shall be headed by a qualified Director IV and assisted by a Director III.

The Chairperson of the Commission shall appoint such personnel necessary to carry out the objectives, policies and functions of the Commission subject to civil service laws, rules and regulations.

SEC. 12. *Regional Operations.* – The regional offices of the Commission are headed by Regional Directors with the rank and emoluments of Director IV to be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

The regional offices shall have the following functions:

- a. Implement the programs of the Commission in the regional level which is under their jurisdiction;
- b. Develop and recommend programs for regional and local-level implementation within the policies set by the Commission;
- c. Perform such other duties and functions as may be deemed necessary.

For this purpose, there shall be a legal division in each regional office created pursuant to Section 13 of this Act, to ensure the effective action on legal matters in the region with corresponding additional staffing pattern.

SEC. 13. *Quasi-Judicial Powers of the Commission.* -

A. Subject Matter

The Commission shall exercise exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters concerning the opening, closure and maintenance of HEIs including SUCs and LUCs, their respective programs, faculty, enrolled students and all disputes governing these subject matters.

B. Process

The Commission shall issue the corresponding rules, regulations and guidelines in the specific matters that it may exercise jurisdiction over, *Provided*, that these shall be duly published in a newspaper of general circulation within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, *Provided further*, that the Commission may issue amendatory rules as needed for the effective disposition of cases within its quasi-judicial powers, *Provided finally*, that the applicable rules on hierarchy of courts and primary jurisdiction under the Rules of Court and applicable jurisprudence shall be adhered to.

C. Oversight

The Chairperson shall appoint one (1) Commissioner to oversee the execution and implementation of the Commission's quasi-judicial decision-making process, as well as the appeal process to the Commission En Banc.

SEC. 14. *Higher Education Development Fund.* – The Higher Education Development Fund established under Republic Act No. 7722 shall be used exclusively for the strengthening of higher education in all regions of the country.

- a) The Government shall continue to contribute to the Trust Fund, as follows:

- (1) The equivalent of forty percent (40%) annual share on the total gross collections of the travel tax, pursuant to the provisions of Section 73 of Republic Act No. 9593 or the “Tourism Act of 2009”;
 - (2) The equivalent of thirty percent (30%) share of the annual collections from the Professional Registration Fee; and
 - (3) The equivalent of one percent (1%) of the gross sales of the lotto operation of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).
- b) Government financing institutions identified and requested by the Commission may contribute to the Fund an amount equivalent to not less than three percent (3%) but not more than five percent (5%) of their unimpaired surplus realized during the immediately preceding year.
- c) The Fund shall have a private portion to be raised from donations, gifts, and other conveyances including materials, equipment, properties and services by gratuitous title which are exempt from donor’s tax and shall constitute as allowable deduction from the income of the donor for income tax purposes.

SEC. 15. *Management and Administration of the Higher Education Development Trust Fund.* – The Fund shall be administered by the Commission. For sound and judicious management of the Trust Fund, the Commission shall appoint a reputable government financial institution as portfolio manager of the Trust Fund, subject to the following conditions:

- a) As administrator of the Trust Fund, the Commission shall prepare the necessary guidelines for its use, subject to the following conditions:

- i. No part of the seed capital of the Trust Fund, including earnings thereof, shall be used to underwrite overhead expenses for administration;
 - ii. Unless otherwise stipulated by the private donor, only earnings of private contributions shall be used for administrative expenses;
 - iii. The Commission shall appoint and organize a separate Fund Office to be headed by a Director IV and to be composed of units responsible for resource mobilization, planning and programs, monitoring and evaluation, and finance and administration, among others. Since the Fund comes from contributions from the government and private sector, the Fund Office shall be independent administratively and budgetarily separate from the Commission Secretariat; and
 - iv. The Fund shall be utilized equitably according to regions to strengthen higher education institutions and support priority programs. In no case shall the Fund be utilized for purposes benefiting individuals other than those determined as priorities of the Commission, as governed by guidelines promulgated by the Commission En Banc.
- b) The Commission shall be allowed to retain or use a portion of the trust fund for purposes of generating additional income or funds needed to expand adequate sources of funding or provide funding to meet additional expenses, *Provided*, that the Commission shall set a cap for the amounts and corresponding authorized expenditure and disbursement of the Fund.

- c) The Commission, through the Fund Office, shall ensure accountability and transparency in the conduct of its management and administration of the fund, including but not limited to:
- i. The release of annual or periodic financial statements or transparency reports to the Commission and the individual donors or private sector participants in the fund;
 - ii. Engagement of private auditors for monitoring and expense disbursement, and
 - iii. Publication of trust fund report expenditure to all concerned SUCs, LUCs, and Private HEIs.

SEC. 16. *Faculty Development Fund* – Upon passage of this Act, there shall be established a Faculty Development Fund to be included in the Commission’s annual appropriations under the General Appropriations Act of the year of its effectivity. The Faculty Development Fund shall be no less than 5% of the CHED budget per year, and shall be used for investing in faculty development. This shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. Scholarships for Masteral and Doctorate Degrees in reputable local or international HEIs;
- b. Provision of grants for career enhancement, upskilling and retraining, industry exposure, and research publication, depending on the typology of their home institution;
- c. Training for higher education leaders and administrators to support the professional management of public and private colleges and universities;
- d. All other programs or policies that align with expanding recruitment of highly skilled or specialized faculty, including fellowships, among others; and

- e. Other potential expenditures that relate to the professional development of faculty and staff in higher education, as approved by the Commission.

SEC. 17. Office Of Higher Education Development. - Upon passage of this Act, an Office for Higher Education Development is hereby established within the Commission and headed by a Director IV to formulate, carry out and administer the following functions:

- a. Establish and implement differentiated institutional and program support for HEIs, pursuant to their current HEI classification or their prospective typology in line with Section 8 of this Act;
- b. Provide technical assistance for the establishment of priority programs in higher education, including ladderized programs and microcredentials, among others, in support of National Development priorities;
- c. Facilitate and support collaborations between local and international institutions, both public and private, to upgrade higher education quality, particularly in relation to graduate education and research;
- d. implementation of faculty development initiatives of the commission, consistent with Section 16 of this Act; and
- e. Provide support for the development and strengthening of external accreditation bodies.

SEC. 18. *Technical Panels.* – The Commission shall reconstitute or organize joint technical panels for different disciplines and academic program areas. Technical Panels shall be composed of highly recognized experts in their fields of specialization, industry representatives, relevant government agencies, among others. Said panels may be constituted independently by the Commission, or

jointly, with their counterparts from TESDA, PRC to facilitate coherence in tertiary education qualifications and assessments.

The Technical Panels shall assist the Commission in the following:

- a. setting standards and evaluating academic programs for regulatory and development purposes;
- b. formulating a roadmap for the development of disciplinal and degree programs in view of national requirements;
- c. reviewing, revising and updating policies, standards, and guidelines (PSGs) based on the policy direction set by the Commission; and
- d. serving as resource persons of the Commission in its various activities.

The Technical Panels shall serve as advisory or recommendatory bodies for a specific discipline or related program, and their recommendations are subject to the approval of the Commission *En Banc*.

The participants and personnel in these Technical Panels shall be entitled to a reasonable honorarium for the applicable periods of their participation, and in accordance with rules and guidelines to be issued by the Secretariat.

SEC. 19. *Guarantee of Academic Freedom.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as limiting the academic freedom of universities and colleges. In particular, no abridgment of curricular freedom of the individual educational institutions by the Commission shall be made except for: (a) minimum unit requirements for specific academic programs; (b) general education distribution requirements as may be determined by the Commission; and (c) specific professional subjects as may be stipulated by the various licensing entities. No academic or curricular restriction shall be made upon private educational institutions which are not required for chartered state colleges and universities. *Provided*, that for higher education programs whose requisites for licensure or

practice of profession do not impose statutory limitations under this provision, CHED shall maintain oversight and exact accountability from these institutions to adhere to applicable standards for their performance; *Provided further*, that CHED will issue applicable guidelines and standards to enable high-performing HEIs to be subjected to differentiated autonomy, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9(II)(g) of this Act.

SEC. 20. *Guarantee of Religious Freedom.* – No higher education student, faculty, or other members of the academic community shall be prohibited from exercising their right to religious freedom in the HEI or any of its campuses.

SEC. 21. *Quality Assurance.* – The Commission shall ensure that all higher education institutions are responsible for the quality of their programs and have an established system of internal quality assurance. HEIs are also expected to have their programs externally reviewed at least every five (5) years to keep them abreast with developments in the field. The Commission shall provide incentives to institutions of higher learning, public or private, whose programs are externally accredited or assessed by reputable local or international external quality assurance agencies or whose needs are for such accreditation or assessment.

SEC. 22. *Tax Exemptions.* – Any donation, contribution, bequest, and grant which may be made to the Commission shall constitute as allowable deduction from the income of the donor for income tax purposes and shall be exempt from donor's tax, subject to such conditions as provided under the National Internal Revenue Code, as amended.

SEC. 23. *Authority.* – The Commission shall exercise such authority as may be deemed necessary within its premises or areas of operation to effectively carry out its powers and functions and to attain its objectives: *Provided*, That the

Commission may seek the assistance of other government agencies for the proper implementation of this Act.

SEC. 24. *Periodic Review.* – The Commission shall undertake a periodic assessment of its accomplishment, review and update the roadmap of Philippine Higher Education every six (6) years. The updated roadmap shall be submitted to Congress and the Office of the President for the formulation of new policies necessary for the continuous modernization of higher education.

SEC. 25. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged to the current year's appropriations of the Commission on Higher Education. Thereafter, such amount necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 26. *Transitory Provisions.* – The incumbent chairperson and commissioners shall serve as chairperson and commissioners respectively under the terms for which they have been appointed without need of new appointments. The incumbent executive director shall likewise serve as executive director without need of a new appointment.

All officers and personnel of the Commission shall continue to perform their duties and responsibilities and receive their corresponding salaries and benefits. The approval of this Act shall not cause any demotion in rank or diminution of salary, benefits and other privileges of the incumbent personnel of the Commission.

SEC. 27. *Repealing Clause.* - Republic Act No. 7722, otherwise known as the “Higher Education Act of 1994,” is hereby repealed. All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof which are

inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 28. *Separability Clause.* - If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions or parts hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 29. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,