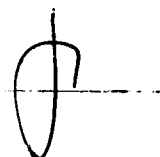


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**SENATE**

**S.B. No. 51**

REC'D  


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**Introduced by SENATOR WIN GATCHALIAN**

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**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**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The 1987 Constitution provides that the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.<sup>1</sup> The State shall also establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society<sup>2</sup> while recognizing and promoting academic freedom<sup>3</sup> in all higher education institutions.

Consistent with such declaration, Philippine higher education experienced three major reforms from 2012 to 2021, which include the adoption of an outcomes-based typology<sup>4</sup> for programs and institutions, the

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<sup>1</sup> 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Sec. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at Sec. 2 (1).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at Sec. 5 (2).

<sup>4</sup> CHED Memorandum Order No. 46, s.2012. Policy-Standard to Enhanced Quality Assurance (QA) in Philippine Higher Education Through an Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based QA.

establishment of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF)<sup>5</sup> setting competency standards, pathways, and equivalencies, and the K to 12 law<sup>6</sup>, which added two years to the country's basic education cycle.<sup>7</sup>

The K to 12 law was expected to reduce the number of units<sup>8</sup> needed to graduate as general education (GE) courses are placed in the basic education curriculum.<sup>9</sup> The revision is also expected to provide Filipinos with a more comprehensive education that emphasizes critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world applications of knowledge<sup>10</sup> in order to meet the acceptable Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-based college readiness standards<sup>11</sup> and for the global competitiveness of Filipino graduates.<sup>12</sup> However, GE courses are continuously being offered at the college level and have remained high over the years, and any reductions thereto were simply replaced by more professional courses such that, overall, baccalaureate programs in the Philippines remain bloated compared to benchmarks from the EU<sup>13</sup>, Australia, and ASEAN<sup>14,15</sup>

While the K to 12 law brought about the decrease in the number of GE courses at the college level,<sup>16</sup> where the extent of reduction varies by

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<sup>5</sup> Republic Act (R.A.) No. 10968 or the "PQF Act", June 16, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> R.A. No. 10533 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013", July 23, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Largoza, G.L. and Fernandez, C.G. (2025). Review of CHED Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) Pre- and Post-K to 12 Reforms. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. Discussion Paper Series No. 2025-13.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> 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).

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* Note 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Supra* Note 6, at Sec. 5.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> ASEAN members include Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

<sup>15</sup> *Supra* Note 7.

<sup>16</sup> CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, s.2013. General Education Curriculum Holistic Understandings, Intellectual and Civic Competencies.

program,<sup>17</sup> such decrease was insufficient to significantly shorten the duration of college programs.<sup>18</sup>

This legislation rationalizes the structure of college education and enhances the specialization and efficiency in higher education by setting the standard duration of any bachelor's degree program to not more than three (3) years, except as otherwise provided by law mandating a longer duration or for licensure purposes. The three-year structure for bachelor's degree programs has been widely adopted by countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, which aimed to establish a system of "easily readable and comparable degrees<sup>19</sup>" across European higher education systems. This reform was designed to enhance academic mobility, promote international recognition of qualifications, and streamline the transition between undergraduate and graduate studies.

A majority of signatory countries have implemented the 3+2 model: three (3) years for a bachelor's degree followed by two (2) years for a master's degree. Countries such as Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Finland, and the United Kingdom have institutionalized this structure<sup>20</sup>. In addition, several non-signatory countries, including Australia<sup>21</sup>, India<sup>22</sup>, and New Zealand<sup>23</sup>, have also adopted the three-year model for most of their undergraduate programs.

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<sup>17</sup> Senate Committee on Basic Education analysis based on the CHED (2024) data.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> <https://ehea.info/page-ministerial-conference-bologna-1999>

<sup>20</sup> [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\(three%20or%204%2Dyears\):%20Germany%2C%20Austria%2C%20Norway%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(three%20or%204%2Dyears):%20Germany%2C%20Austria%2C%20Norway%2C%20Poland%2C%20Portugal%2C%20Slovakia%2C%20Slovenia%2C%20and%20Spain)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.studyaustralia.gov.au/en/plan-your-studies/universities-and-higher-education/undergraduate-qualifications>

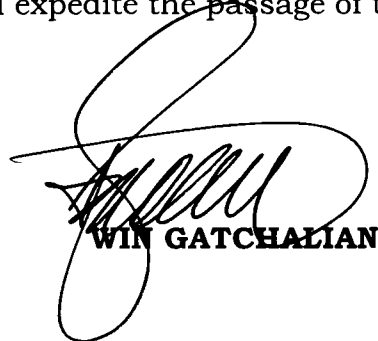
<sup>22</sup> <https://iee.com/blog/assessing-indian-education-degrees/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Qualifications-standards/Understanding-NZQF/NZQF.pdf>

This legislation also authorizes the CHED 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. With this reform, the CHED can ensure that the college degree programs will not only be aligned with the evolving sectoral and technological trends<sup>24</sup> but will also enhance the overall quality and efficiency of higher learning.<sup>25</sup>

Further, this legislation ensures that 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.

By adopting a three-year specialization-focused college education and integrating GE subjects in the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, college students can focus on professional courses aimed at developing advanced competencies in their chosen fields of study. This legislative landmark will reform the current system and promote a more focused, high-quality, and relevant college education while upholding the academic freedom of higher education institutions as guaranteed by the 1987 Constitution. With this, I earnestly urge this Congress to support and expedite the passage of this vital measure.



WIN GATCHALIAN

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<sup>24</sup> *Supra* Note 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Supra* Note 15.

25 JUL -2 P5:56

**SENATE**

**S.B. No. 51**

RECEIVED



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**Introduced by SENATOR WIN GATCHALIAN**

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**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:*

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

3  
4       Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to establish,  
5       maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of  
6       education that promotes accessible, efficient, and high-quality college  
7       education that is relevant to the needs of the people and society.

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

12  
13      Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

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

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

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

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

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

24  
25       Sec. 4. *Nominal Duration of Bachelor's Degrees.* – The nominal duration  
26 of any bachelor's degree program offered by higher education institutions  
27 shall not exceed three (3) academic years, except as otherwise provided by law  
28 mandating a longer duration or additional requisites for licensure purposes.

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

1 The college academic years shall be devoted exclusively to professional  
2 courses aimed at developing advanced competencies in the student's chosen  
3 field of study. Further, the CHED, in consultation with the PRC, shall issue  
4 guidelines for the recognition and structuring of applicable exceptions.  
5

6 *Sec. 5. Removal of General Education Courses in the College Curriculum.*

7 – General education courses shall not be required for the completion of the  
8 requirements of any bachelor's degree in higher education institutions.

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

13 The CHED, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd),  
14 shall ensure the alignment of the SHS curriculum with the knowledge base  
15 required for specialization at the college level to foster critical thinking and  
16 ensure college readiness of students, provide more time for internship and  
17 advanced specialization in higher education, enhance the overall efficiency  
18 and quality of higher learning, and avoid remedial and duplication of basic  
19 education subjects, consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 10533  
20 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013".  
21

22 *Sec. 6. Guarantee of Academic Freedom.* – Nothing in this Act shall be  
23 construed as limiting the academic freedom of higher education institutions.  
24 In particular, no abridgment of curricular freedom of the individual  
25 educational institutions by the CHED shall be made except for setting the  
26 minimum unit requirements for specific academic programs and professional  
27 courses as may be stipulated by the various licensing entities. Further, no  
28 academic or curricular restriction shall be made upon private higher  
29 education institutions which are not similarly imposed on chartered state  
30 universities and colleges.  
31

32 *Sec. 7. Transitory Provision.* – The DepEd and higher education  
33 institutions shall be given a transition period of three (3) years from the

1   effectivity of this Act to redesign and implement their respective curricula in  
2   accordance herewith.

3  
4       Sec. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days  
5   from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, in coordination with the DepEd and  
6   the PRC, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for its effective  
7   implementation. The rules and regulations issued pursuant to this section  
8   shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a newspaper of general  
9   circulation.

10  
11       Sec. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is  
12   declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts not  
13   affected shall remain in full force and effect.

14  
15       Sec. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Pertinent provisions of Republic Act No.  
16   7722 or the “Higher Education Act of 1994”, and all other laws, executive  
17   orders, presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations,  
18   issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of  
19   this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

20  
21       Sec. 11. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this  
22   Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette*  
23   or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*