

Accreditation, Internationalization and World University Rankings: Basis for Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines

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Abstract

Accreditation, Internationalization, and World University Rankings (WUR) have increasingly shaped the higher education landscape over the last decade. Whilst these three dimensions have been previously examined in isolation, studies have suggested that there is a strong interplay among them. Applying qualitative content analysis using NVivo and QCAmap software, the study identified eight themes and 23 sub-themes related to accreditation across five international standards of the Asean University Network (AUN, ASEAN), Commission on Academic Accreditation (CAA, UAE), Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA, Oman), Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, Europe), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC, USA); seven WUR themes across the Times Higher Education (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU); and seven internationalization themes based on Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) Philippine Republic Act 11448 and common internationalization definitions. The Philippine accreditation standards revealed no connections in the sub-themes of Documentation, Performance, and Funding and Financial Support within the Accreditation themes. Similarly, in the Internationalization themes, there were no connections found in the Strategy and Communication, Facilities and Infrastructure for Internationalization, and Faculty and Staff Development for Internationalization. In the Ranking themes, there were also no connections in Faculty/Staff Quality, Global Outlook and Diversity, Student Success and Graduation, Global Influence, and Income and Investments. To address these identified gaps, the study extracted indicators from the five international standards and proposed a quality assurance framework aimed at enhancing the outcomes of Accreditation, Internationalization, and World University Rankings for Philippine HEIs.

Keywords: accreditation, internationalization, transnational higher education, quality assurance

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Introduction and Literature Review

Accreditation, Internationalization, and World University Rankings (WUR) are three pivotal elements shaping the strategies and outcomes of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Though traditionally examined as separate entities, recent studies suggest a dynamic interplay among them, where each factor influences and reinforces the others, collectively steering institutional development.

Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Accreditation serves as a quality assurance mechanism, ensuring that educational institutions or programs meet necessary standards set by external evaluators. Accreditation is the process involves evaluating services and operations to determine compliance with applicable standards. Institutions meeting these benchmarks are granted accreditation by the relevant body (ABET, 2021). Similarly, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (ACPE, 2021) views accreditation as a process ensuring that educator preparation providers equip future teachers with essential skills and knowledge. CAEP emphasizes areas like content knowledge, clinical partnerships, program impact, equity, and diversity. Several benefits of accreditation for institutions, including: (1) providing reliable information about institutional quality; (2) ensuring fairness and accountability in student services, graduate achievements, and program delivery; (3) supporting voluntary quality improvement efforts; (4) enhancing students' confidence in institutions; (5) facilitating student transfers between institutions; (6) offering feedback to employers on graduate quality; and (7) unlocking financial support opportunities for students (Cura & Alani, 2018).

World University Rankings

University rankings reflect the global competitiveness of institutions and their relative standing in terms of quality, status, and success (Hou & Jacob, 2017). Prominent world university rankings include:

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

Established in 2003 in China, ARWU uses six indicators, including the number of Nobel Prize winners among alumni and faculty, highly cited researchers, scholarly publications, and institutional per capita performance. Data sources include Thomson Reuters' Web of Science and national agency resources. ARWU Focuses on citations, publications, and prizes, emphasizing research output and academic recognition.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)

Launched in 2004 in the UK, QS evaluates universities using six indicators, such as academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-student ratio, international faculty and student ratios, and citations per faculty. Data is sourced from Scopus databases and university portfolio surveys. QS balances academic and employer reputation, faculty-student ratios, and internationalization metrics.

Times Higher Education (THE)

Founded in 2004 in the UK, THE uses 13 indicators, including teaching reputation, research productivity, citation impact, international outreach, and industry income. These rankings rely on data from Thomson Reuters' Web of Science and institutional surveys. THE evaluates teaching, research, internationalization, and industry income, offering a holistic view of institutional performance.

Internationalization

Internationalization refers to the inbound or outbound mobility of faculty and students as a result of any of the 3: (1) individual mobility – where an individual chooses to study/teach abroad or someone from another country chooses to study/teach in the Philippines; (2) academic program mobility – where an academic program has been accepted to be taught in another country; and (3) institutional mobility – where an institution has been licensed to setup a branch in another country (i.e. a Philippine HEI has been granted a permit/license to open a branch campus in another country or a foreign HEI has been granted a permit/license to open a branch campus in the Philippines).

In a study by Buckner & Stein (2020) involving 1,439 higher education institutions across 137 countries, finding that administrators in knowledge-rich countries like the USA and Anglophone Canada see internationalization to enhance students' global awareness, with some also highlighting revenue generation as a benefit. However, Tight (2022) argued against the notion that internationalization in higher education is merely a transient trend driven by Western nations through international recruitment and the creation of overseas campuses. In the Philippines, research conducted by Ferrer (2019) with 87 private and state universities and colleges from 16 regions, revealing that the main perceived benefits of internationalization were: (1) boosted international cooperation and capacity building; (2) improved international performance via adopting global best practices; and (3) networking opportunities for faculty. Conversely, the risks associated with internationalization included limited access for students lacking financial resources and unequal benefit distribution among partners. In this study, 94.25% of respondents incorporated internationalization into their strategic planning. It is worth noting that internationalization is one of the key components of the world university rankings.

The above literature shows that accreditation, internationalization and world university rankings serve as complementary forces in higher education. Accreditation ensures quality assurance through external and internal mechanisms, rankings highlight institutional competitiveness on a global scale, while internationalization boosts global competitiveness. Together, they play a vital role in shaping the strategies, outcomes, and reputation of higher education institutions worldwide.

Research Gap

Although existing research confirms that accreditation systems are vital for improving the quality of higher education and significantly support internationalization and global rankings, there is limited exploration of why these outcomes remain underdeveloped in the Philippine higher education sector. Despite having an established accreditation system, the country exhibits poor levels of internationalization and low standing in world university rankings compared to neighboring countries like Singapore, Japan, and China. This gap underscores the

necessity to examine how the design, implementation, and alignment of accreditation practices in the Philippines compare to those in countries with higher-ranking HEIs, especially concerning their effectiveness in promoting global competitiveness and international collaboration.

Statement of Purpose

This study aims to explore the role of accreditation in advancing the internationalization and global competitiveness of Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs). Through a comparative analysis of accreditation practices in countries with high-ranking universities, the research seeks to identify effective strategies and quality assurance mechanisms that can be adapted to the Philippine context. By aligning local accreditation standards with internationally recognized benchmarks, the study intends to contribute to the development of stronger accreditation frameworks that enhance internationalization outcomes and improve performance in global university rankings. Ultimately, this research aims to support policy reforms and institutional practices that elevate the quality and global reputation of Philippine higher education.

Purpose 1: To compare Philippine accreditation standards and criteria with those of the countries which rank high in the world university rankings.

Purpose 2: To introduce institutional standards extracted from the AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA and SACSCOC to align the Philippine accreditation system with international standards.

Methodology

The study by Aspers & Corte (2019), a qualitative research design was employed, incorporating an iterative process that involved both deduction and induction to identify and analyze various categories. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was utilized as the primary method. QCA is a technique for the subjective interpretation of textual data through systematic coding and the identification of themes or patterns (Prasad, 2019). It is defined as any effort to reduce qualitative data and extract meaning by identifying core consistencies within a large volume of material. Because Accreditation, Internationalization, and Ranking are distinct variables that cannot be directly mapped onto each other, themes enabled the exploration of possible connections and relationships among them.

Developing the Themes Using QCAMap Software

For the Accreditation theme, the study examined practices from international accreditation bodies of the AUN, CAA, QAA, OAAA, and SACSCOC to better understand the core concepts of accreditation. These standards are available online in the organization's respective websites. In exploring the Internationalization theme, the study analyzed common definitions and the provisions of the Transnational Higher Education Act, or Republic Act No. 11448 (2019) of the Philippines. For the Ranking theme, the focus was on the indicators used by the three major global university rankings: ARWU, QS, and THE. The development of these themes involved the following steps:

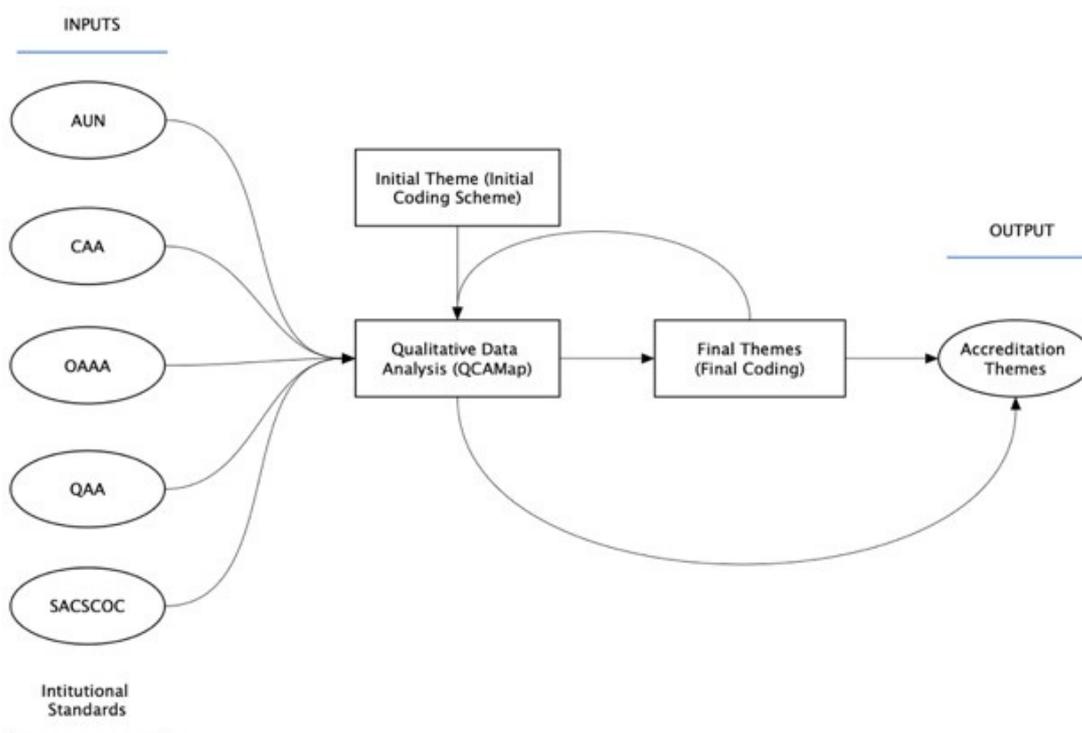
Accreditation Themes

To develop the Accreditation Themes, the Institutional Standards of the AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA and SACSCOC were used as inputs in the QCAMap. There were 10 initial coding

schemes used for 29% of the data as required by the software to group common attributes, elements, concepts, or ideas of the five institutional standards. Using deductive and inductive reasoning, eight final coding schemes which generated and served as the final accreditation themes. These final accreditation themes were used to group the remaining 71% of data. Figure 1 presents the process.

Figure 1

Developing the Accreditation Themes



Internationalization Themes

Using the same procedure presented in Figure 1, the Internationalization Themes were developed using the provisions of the Transnational Higher Education Act (TNHE) on August 28, 2019, through Republic Act 11448, and common definitions of internationalization, as input to the QCAMap.

World University Rankings Themes

Likewise, using the same procedure presented in Figure 1, the Ranking Themes were developed using the indicators of the ARWU, QS, and THE, as input to the QCAMap.

Finding the Number of Connections Using NVivo Software

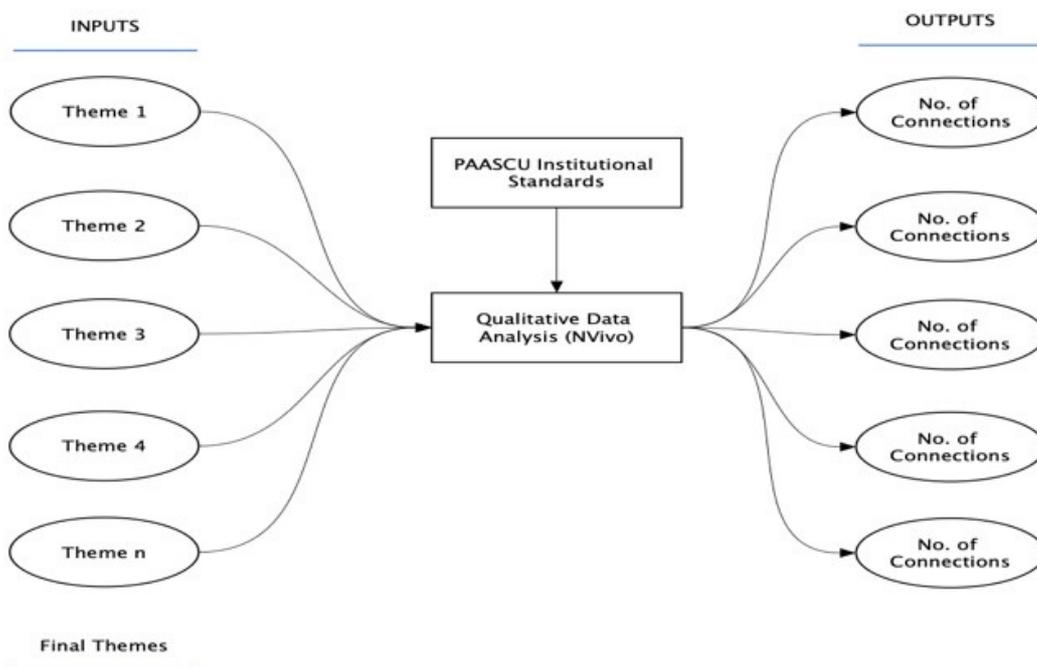
After completing the QCAMap, the NVivo software was used to finalize the Accreditation, Internationalization, and Ranking Themes which involved the following steps:

1. Preparing the Institutional Standards for importing to NVivo
2. Using the final themes generated from the QCAMap as input
3. Finding the number of connections from the institutional standards for each theme

Finding Connections of the Philippine Institutional Standards With the Accreditation, Internationalization, and Ranking Themes

At the time of the study, only the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) Institutional Standards was available as basis for the study. PAASCU is a private, voluntary non-profit, non-stock corporation that accredits academic programs in the Philippines. Using the final themes, the PAASCU (23) Institutional Standards were inputted to the NVivo to find the number of connections for each of the Accreditation, Internationalization, and Ranking Themes. The number of connections shows the strength of relationship of each institutional standards to the final accreditation themes.

Figure 2
Finding the Number of Connections for Each Themes



Developing the Proposed Institutional Standards

A summary of the data from the QCAMap showing each institutional standard from the AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA, and SACSCOC that falls under each theme was used as basis for proposing a list of institutional standards that can be used to augment the Philippine institutional standards.

Results and Discussion

To find answers for the Statement of Purpose 1, the study compared Philippine accreditation standards and criteria with those of the countries which rank high in the world university rankings such as USA, Europe, UAE, ASEAN Countries, and the Sultanate of Oman. To do this, Accreditation Themes were developed from the 5 Institutional Standards, and the Philippine Institutional Standards were mapped to find the number of connections.

The PAASCU Institutional Standards has 23 indicators and criteria which when mapped against the accreditation themes showed no connection with *Documentation*, *Performance*, and *Funding and Financial Support*. The findings suggests that while the Philippine accreditation standards exhibit similar characteristics with the international accreditation bodies, it lacks crucial components which are important in elevating the Philippine accreditation standards. Well-documented processes and measurable outcomes are critical for fostering transparency and accountability among stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, regulatory bodies, and the broader community. This transparency is a cornerstone of institutional credibility, which is essential for meeting accreditation standards, gaining international recognition, and improving global rankings. Transparent practices not only build trust but also promote collaboration across all levels of the institution.

Presented in Table 1 are the Accreditation Themes and the number of connections that the PAASCU Institutional Standards have.

Table 1

Results of Mapping the Philippine Institutional Standards With Accreditation Themes

Accreditation Themes	Number of Connections
Continuous Improvement and Enhancement	8
Documentation	0
Improvement	1
Review and Monitoring	2
Systems and Processes	5
Governance and Management	9
Leadership	1
Mission, Vision, and Values	6
Planning	1
Policies and Procedures	1
Resource Management	4
Fiscal Resources and Budgeting	2
Resource Allocation and Management	2
Student Support and Services	5
Academic Support Services	2
General Support Services	3
Community Engagement and Services	7
Community and Stakeholder Relationship	4
Community and Stakeholder Services	3
Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Design	7
Assessment and Moderation	1
Curriculum	1
Graduate Attributes and Learning Outcomes	3
Teaching and Learning Activities	2
Human Resource Management	2
Performance	0
Qualifications	1
Training and Development	1
Research and Scholarly Activities	2
Funding and Financial Support	0
Performance and Outputs	2

Clear goal setting and alignment (Aguinis, 2019)—particularly between individual and institutional objectives—enhance performance management and institutional coherence. Aligning personal goals with institutional targets ensures that every member of the organization understands their role in achieving shared outcomes, a key factor in demonstrating quality assurance during accreditation reviews.

Furthermore, strategic financial investment in research and scholarly activities—such as innovation, commercialization, and start-up development—amplifies the institution’s academic reputation and research productivity. These outputs not only contribute to institutional rankings but also align with internationalization goals by attracting global partnerships and talent. Importantly, such initiatives extend the institution’s impact beyond academia, contributing to national development and economic growth.

Presented in Table 2 are the Internationalization Themes and the number of connections that the PAASCU Institutional Standards have.

Table 2

Results of Mapping the Philippine Institutional Standards With Internationalization Themes

Internationalization Themes	Number of Connections
Internationalization Strategy and Communication	0
Global Engagement and Collaboration	1
Facility and Infrastructure for Internationalization	0
International Standards	23
Faculty and Staff Development for Internationalization	0
Research and Scholarly Activities with Global Impact	2
Student Mobility	1

The PAASCU Institutional Standards has 23 indicators and criteria which when mapped against the internationalization themes showed no connection with *Internationalization Strategy and Communication*, *Facility and Infrastructure for Internationalization*, and *Faculty and Staff Development for Internationalization*.

The above findings suggests that while the Philippine accreditation standards exhibit similar characteristics with the international accreditation bodies, it lacks crucial components which are important in elevating internationalization outcomes. Internationalization when embedded into the strategic pillar provides the necessary direction for planning, decision-making, and implementation - shaping the long-term direction of the HEI and reinforces its global engagement goals. This strategic orientation must be clearly communicated to both internal and external audiences to gain broad support and recognition.

High-quality infrastructure and facilities are vital enablers of successful internationalization. Institutions must invest in efficient academic and administrative systems to support international recruitment, admissions, and student services. This includes streamlined processes for visa support, housing, orientation, and academic guidance for international students. On the other hand, Faculty and staff development must evolve beyond traditional professional training to encompass the skills and competencies required in a globalized education environment. Additionally, internationalization-focused development equips educators and administrators with tools for inclusive teaching, cross-cultural communication, and global citizenship.

Presented in Table 3 are the Internationalization Themes and the number of connections that the PAASCU institutional standards have.

Table 3

Results of Mapping the Philippine Institutional Standards With Ranking Themes

Ranking Themes	Number of Connections
Innovation and Knowledge Transfer	2
Faculty/Staff Quality	0
Global Outlook and Diversity	0
Academic and Employer Reputation	1
Student Success and Graduation	0
Global Influence	0
Income and Investments	0

The PAASCU Institutional Standards has 23 indicators and criteria which when mapped against the accreditation themes showed no connection with *Faculty/Staff Quality*, *Global Outlook and Diversity*, *Student Success and Graduation*, *Global Influence*, and *Income and Investments*. The above findings suggests that while the Philippine accreditation standards exhibit similar characteristics with the international accreditation bodies, it lacks crucial components which are important in elevating ranking outcomes.

The quality of faculty and staff is a critical determinant of an institution's standing in global university rankings (WUR). HEIs achieves excellence in teaching, research, institutional performance, and student outcomes. Faculty members play a central role in engaging students, cultivating critical thinking, and fostering academic environments where learners can excel. Their contributions to research and scholarly work are vital in driving innovation and enhancing the institution's academic reputation.

Global Outlook and Diversity refer to cultivating an institutional environment that embraces international perspectives, values cultural diversity, and actively engages with global educational issues. It enriches the academic and social experience by promoting cultural awareness and inclusion across all levels of the institution. This commitment includes advancing equity and representation, ensuring that women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups have a voice in leadership and decision-making processes. It fosters a culture of mutual respect, inclusion, and co-existence—core values in building a globally responsive institution.

Student Success and Graduation lie at the heart of higher education. They encompass students' academic achievement, personal growth, and readiness for professional careers—outcomes developed and nurtured throughout their educational journey. Key indicators of student success include retention, academic progression, and on-time graduation.

To find answers to Statement of Purpose 2, presented in Table 4 are the extracted Institutional Standards using QCAMap from the AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA and SACSCOC to align the Philippine accreditation system with international standards.

Table 4*Institutional Standards From the AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA, and SACSCOC*

THEME 1: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT	
Documentation	
1	There is an established document classification policy to safeguard privacy and confidentiality, ensure that the information remain current and appropriate.
2	The institution has a document classification policy which provides guidelines to protect institutional as well as individual data from unauthorized access.
3	The published information is clear, accurate, objective and readily accessible to stakeholders.
4	The Institution has comprehensive, consistent, and accurate published (print or electronics) Policies and Procedures Manual.
5	The Institution has comprehensive, consistent, and accurate published (print or electronics) Health and Safety Manual.
6	The Institution has comprehensive, consistent, and accurate published (print or electronics) Employee Handbook.
7	The Institution has comprehensive, consistent, and accurate published (print or electronics) Program Specification (Program Catalog).
8	The Institution has comprehensive, consistent, and accurate published (print or electronics) Student Handbook.
9	The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Academic Handbook (covering all phases of teaching and learning).
10	The institution provides Enrolment and Student Records.
11	The institution maintains a record of all employees.
Improvement	
1	Results on the achievement of the course learning outcomes are used to form basis for course improvement.
2	Results of the program evaluation are used as basis for improving the program.
3	Performance is periodically monitored and results are released to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner for improvement.
Review and Monitoring	
1	The performance of the governance and management teams are periodically evaluated.
2	The planning process and the accomplishments against plans are periodically reviewed to form basis for improvement.
3	There are key performance indicators and targets that are established to measure performance at the institutional, department and individual units. The performance indicators are benchmarked to reflect international best practices.
4	The institution has a system to oversee, direct, implement, monitor and review research activities, resources, and outputs.
5	The institution has a mechanism to solicit information on Student Satisfaction on all services and actions taken to address their concerns are communicated in a timely manner.
6	The institution collects, analyze and use relevant information on the effective management of the programs including feedback from alumni, student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with programs and services, employment graduation rates, and employer satisfaction.
Systems and Processes	
1	The Institution has a Quality Management System/Quality Assurance.

- 2 The institution has a quality assurance system or continuous quality enhancement system which covers the review and monitoring of all entities and activities that includes the collection of institutional data and statistics as basis for decision-making.
- 3 The Institution has a clearly established and communicated Policy Management System which governs the policy implementation, review, approval, communication and archiving.
- 4 The quality assurance system is a cyclical approach wherein the progress made on the last review is taken into consideration when preparing the next plan for continuous improvement.
- 5 The institution has a system for collection, management and control of documents which include guidelines for archiving and disposal.
- 6 The institution has a mechanism for monitoring and reporting health and safety incidents.
- 7 The institution complies with the national requirements on health and safety.
- 8 The institution has a health and safety guidelines that are communicated to the students, faculty, staff, visitors and other stakeholders.
- 9 The institution ensures that health and safety guidelines are provided in the use of equipment and that fire drills, earthquake drills, terrorist attacks and the likes are conducted for faculty, staff and students on periodic basis.

THEME 2: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership

- 1 The Institution applies the Principle of Integrity in all matters of its operation and adheres to the highest ethical standards in teaching, professional development and service.
- 2 The Institution has a clearly defined governance and management structure.
- 3 The governance and management structure has a clearly defined authority, responsibility and accountability matrix.
- 4 The governance team exercises full responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the institution.
- 5 There are clear communication channel and reporting lines.

Mission, Vision, and Values

- 1 The Mission, Vision and Value Statements have been developed in consultation with the stakeholders and are communicated through difference channels such as publications, websites, catalog, etc.
- 2 The Mission, Vision and Value Statements are cascaded and form the cornerstone for the development of the Institution's Strategic Plan.

Planning

- 1 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Strategic plan.
 - 2 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Operational Plan.
 - 3 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Risk Management Plan.
 - 4 The Institution has Risk Registers and Mitigation Strategies.
 - 5 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Financial Management Plan.
 - 6 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Human Resource Management Plan.
 - 7 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Physical Resources/Infrastructure Management Plan.
 - 8 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Community and Industry Engagement Plan.
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Policies and Procedures

- 1 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Community and Industry Engagement Policies and Procedures.
- 2 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Program Planning and Development.
- 3 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Planning for Changes.
- 4 The plans are mission driven, includes goals, objectives and performance indicators
- 5 The institution has well-established policies and procedures related to succession, re-deployment, and severance that are appropriately communicated to stakeholders and consistently implemented.
- 6 The institution has policies and procedures for budgetary planning and control, auditing, risk management, insurance and indemnity coverage, and internal auditing.
- 7 Educational Policies and Procedures (covering all phases of student “life cycle” from admission to graduation).
- 8 There are student grievance policy and procedure for academic related matters that is readily accessible, effectively communicated to staff and student.
- 9 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Research and Scholarly Activities.
- 10 The institution has policies and procedures to protect and manage intellectual property such as inventions, patents, copyrights and research results.
- 11 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Budgeting for the Program.
- 12 The institution has a well-established policies and procedures for appeals, grievances and disciplinary actions that are consistently implemented.
- 13 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Grading System.

THEME 3: RECOURCE MANAGEMNET

Fiscal Resources and Budgeting

- 1 The Institution has an annual budget that is formally approved, effectively managed and the financial statement is externally audited.
- 2 The Institution has appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities that ensure adequate and appropriate learning and support resources including funds for teach-out in the event of institutional or program closure.
- 3 The Institutional Budget are linked to the institutional plans.
- 4 Where the institution has associated entities, there is mechanism to ensure that the Institution is protected against financial, legal and reputational liabilities from the entity it controls/owns.

Resource Allocation and Management

- 1 The institutions provide the necessary tools, facilities and equipment to faculty and staff to allow them to dispatch their duty.
- 2 The institution provides recreational facilities and activities to foster camaraderie and collegiality.

- 3 The institution maintains appropriate number of academic, non-academic and support staff to support its the mission and goals.

THEME 4: STUDENT SERVICE AND SUPPORT

Academic Support Services

- 1 The institution supports the timely completion of degree through appropriate Academic Advising.
- 2 The institution recognizes and supports the different needs of International Students.
- 3 The institution provides Learning Resource Center/Library.
- 4 The institution provides Electronic and Non-Electronic Collections.
- 5 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Recognition of Prior Learning.
- 6 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Student Entry Standards.
- 7 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to General Education Courses.
- 8 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Student Recruitment and Admission.
- 9 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Transfer Credits and Advanced Standing.
- 10 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Student Retention and Progression.
- 11 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Definition of Academic Freedom.
- 12 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Credit Hours.
- 13 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information, and policies and procedures related to Degree Audit.

General Support Services

- 1 The student grievance policy and procedure is consistently used to resolve student grievances in a manner that is fair, impartial and transparent.

- 2 There is a mechanism for students to air for redress of grievances on non-academic related matters. The procedures is accessible and effectively communicated to students and staff.
- 3 Students are provided with avenues to represent themselves in decisions that affect their learning experience (i.e. Student Council).
- 4 The institution provides Residence Halls.
- 5 The institution provides Catering/Canteen.
- 6 The institution provides Transportation.
- 7 The institution provides Sports and Recreational Activities.
- 8 The institution takes into consideration Student with special needs in the design of the curriculum and facilities management (i.e. special parking, elevators, ramps, PWD toilets. etc).
- 9 The institution provides ongoing Career and Employment Services and support students employability through various activities.
- 10 The institution provides various scholarship and financial support for deserving students.
- 11 The institution provides Student Publication and Clubs.
- 12 The institution provides Student Rights and Code of Conduct.
- 13 The institution provides Medical and Counseling Services.
- 14 The institution provides General Support Services.
- 15 The institution provides Information Technology services.
- 16 The institution provides Teaching and Learning Resources.

THEME 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

Community and Stakeholder Involvement

- 1 The institution has relationship with industry and employers to provide feedback toward program improvement.
- 2 The institution monitors alumni employment and maintains relationship with alumni to draw on their experience for improving the program.
- 3 The institution maintains external relations and networks which include business, industry, professional bodies and non-government organizations.

Community and Stakeholder Services

- 1 The institution enters MOU with other educational providers for benchmarking of best practices.
- 2 The institution has a well-established MoUs with various organizations for On-the-Job Placement of students. OJT students are monitored to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

THEME 6: TEACHING, LEARNING AND CURRICULUM DESIGN

Assessment and Moderation

- 1 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Assessment and moderation of exams.
- 2 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Marking Schemes and Rubrics.

- 3 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Grade Release and Grade Appeal.
- 4 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Examinations Regulations, Handling Results and Records.
- 5 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Academic Security and Invigilation.
- 6 The institution maintains a record of all students including exam scripts and communications.

Curriculum

- 1 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Curriculum Development, Review and Approval.
- 2 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Alignment of the Program with the appropriate Qualifications Framework.

Graduate Attributes and Program Learning Outcomes

- 1 The evaluation of the programs includes direct measures (i.e. student output) and indirect measures (i.e. feedback from employer, OJT supervisors, etc).
- 2 The institution has a mechanism for the periodic evaluation to determine the achievement of the course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes and graduate attributes.
- 3 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Graduate Attributes.
- 4 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Program Learning Outcomes.

Teaching and Learning Activities

- 1 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Course Delivery and Program Evaluation.
- 2 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Remedial of Courses.

- 3 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Graduation Requirements.
- 4 The Institution offering degrees by coursework, by research, by correspondence, or by distance learning; at undergraduate or graduate levels, should each have well-established and published information and policies and procedures related to: Student study mode and load.

THEME 7: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Performance

- 1 The Institution periodically evaluated faculty and staff performance and provides timely feedback including coaching and mentoring.
- 2 Results of performance evaluation are communicated to the stakeholders and form basis for rewards, recognitions, incentives, coaching and/or mentoring.

Qualifications

- 1 Faculty qualifications are aligned with the courses that he/she teaches, and in accordance with the national guidance.
- 2 There is a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process that is consistently applied to both part-time and full-time faculty and staff.
- 3 There is proper induction provided to all faculty and staff at relevant levels within the institutions where faculty and staff are informed regarding their terms of employment and expectations in terms of roles, teaching, research, and community engagements.

Professional Development

- 1 There are opportunities for faculty and staff professional development, training, use of innovation and use of new technologies.
- 2 There are opportunities for promotion, awards and recognition for faculty and staff.
- 3 The institution provides support for professional development in research, scholarships and other development programs for staff.
- 4 The institution clearly provides roles and expectations, code of conduct. key performance indicators and targets to faculty and staff for performance management.

THEME 8: RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

Funding and Financial Support

- 1 The institution has a budget allocated to research and scholarly activities.
- 2 The institution has a research funding scheme which include conference participation and research publications.

Performance and Outputs

- 1 The institution defines the expectations for research and scholarly activities which are in line with its mission and adheres to ethics and bio-safety standards.
 - 2 The institution has research collaboration and partnerships.
 - 3 The institution supports research, innovation, collaboration and research excellence.
 - 4 The Institution has a comprehensive and integrated Research and Scholarly Activities.
 - 5 The institution has a well-established guideline for research commercialization, student involvement in research, and research-teaching nexus.
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Conclusion

Accreditation bodies establish defined standards and criteria that higher education institutions (HEIs) must meet to attain and maintain accredited status. These benchmarks are typically outlined in a document referred to as Institutional Standards, which covers key areas such as governance and management, teaching and learning, program quality, qualifications, and institutional effectiveness. The study identified common themes and sub-themes across the institutional standards of international accreditation bodies such as AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA, and SACSCOC, highlighting benchmark criteria that collectively define institutional quality assurance. Furthermore, the analysis revealed opportunities for enhancement within the Philippine accreditation system. By integrating relevant criteria and indicators from these international frameworks, the Philippine system can be strengthened—potentially leading to improved outcomes in accreditation, internationalization, and global rankings.

Recommendation

In light of the findings, the following are the recommendations:

Benchmark Accreditation Practices Against International Standards: Conduct a systematic benchmarking of the Philippine accreditation system with international accreditation bodies such as AUN, CAA, OAAA, QAA, and SACSCOC to identify specific areas for enhancement. This process aims to elevate the quality of higher education by aligning local accreditation practices with globally recognized standards.

Validate Standards and Criteria Through Broader Stakeholder Engagement: Strengthen the validation process of the proposed standards and criteria—derived from leading international frameworks. Broader participation will help identify additional areas for improvement and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Philippine HEIs align with international benchmarks.

Continue Benchmarking to Drive Continuous Improvement: The development of standards and criteria should be viewed as an evolving process. Ongoing benchmarking with international accreditation bodies should go beyond mere comparison and aim for continuous improvement and institutional maturity, fostering a culture of excellence and global competitiveness in higher education.

Promote Further Research in Quality Assurance and Accreditation: Encourage more in-depth studies on quality assurance and accreditation practices across HEIs. This should be complemented by sharing of best practices and promoting open data access to support collaboration, transparency, and informed decision-making within the higher education sector.

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