

UP CIDS

Center for Integrative and  
Development Studies

## POLICY BRIEF

UP CIDS POLICY BRIEF SERIES 18-005

Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform

GRADUATE DEGREES OF HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY  
IN THE PHILIPPINES: STATUS AND WAYS FORWARD<sup>1</sup>Karol Mark Yee, Clarissa C. David, and Geoffrey Ducanes<sup>2</sup>**Abstract**

This policy brief provides an overview of the profile of higher education faculty in the Philippines in terms of highest educational attainment. Data shows a marked improvement in the number of faculty with graduate degrees, from 33% in 1998 to 53% in 2016, alongside significant investments in scholarship programs and various policy regulations instituted by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Among all higher education faculty, the largest number of doctorate degree holders are in state universities and colleges (SUCs) at 39%, are in the field of education science and teacher training at 22%, and are in the National Capital Region. Policy recommendations for aggressive expansion and strategically targeted faculty development programs are discussed, including necessary reforms in graduate education.

**Graduate qualifications for higher education faculty**

Graduate qualification has been a longstanding requirement for regular employment of higher education faculty in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> Tenured or “regular faculty” status in higher education institutions (HEIs) are required by CHED to have a master’s or doctorate degree, depending on the

program.<sup>4</sup> Even with the requirement in place, majority of faculty teaching college students do not have advanced degrees, but are allowed to teach as non-tenured faculty and make up a significant portion of the teaching force.

The value of graduate degrees among faculty accrues through its impact not only on teaching but also on research and extension, given the trifocal role of higher education in contrast to basic education. Faculty with master’s and doctorate degrees engage in knowledge creation, are expected to keep abreast of developments in their field of study, are pushed to contribute knowledge through academic publications, and are supposed to apply and disseminate these through extension activities. This, in turn, enriches teaching and ultimately benefits undergraduate students. The challenge for the Philippines is to increase the number of faculty with appropriate and high quality graduate degrees.

While the causal link between faculty with graduate degrees and quality of learning remains arguable, local evidence shows a positive relationship between the number of faculty with master’s and doctorate degrees and the passing rates in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET).<sup>5</sup> Given the increasing competitiveness of the higher education space regionally and

<sup>1</sup> This Policy Brief is a publication of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative Development Studies Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform (UP CIDS-HERPR), funded by the UP Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) provided data.

<sup>2</sup> The first and third authors are Senior Research Fellows of the UP CIDS Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform (UP CIDS-HERPR). The second author is Program Convenor of UP CIDS-HERPR and Professor at the UP College of Mass Communication. The authors are grateful for the research assistance of Shaira Melissa Tengco.

<sup>3</sup> CHED Permit/Recognition requires faculty to be a “holder of a master’s degree, to teach in his major field and where applicable, a holder of appropriate professional license requiring at least a bachelor’s degree for the professional courses. However, in specific fields where there is dearth of holders of Master’s degree, a holder of a professional license requiring at least a bachelor’s degree may be qualified to teach.” This has been put in place as early as 1992 by the former Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS), and maintained by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through CHED Memorandum Order No. 40, Series of 2008 or the Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education (MORPHE).

<sup>4</sup> In 2013, the Supreme Court upheld this policy of CHED requiring faculty to have postgraduate degrees in order to become tenured or regular employees of higher education institutions (HEIs), citing that, “The government has a right to ensure that only qualified persons in possession of sufficient academic knowledge and teaching skills are allowed to teach in such institutions. Government regulation in this field of human activity is desirable for protecting, not only the students, but the public as well from ill-prepared teachers lacking in the required scientific or technical knowledge.” *University of the East v. Pepanio*, G.R. No. 193897 (23 January 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Rosario G. Manasan, “Rationalizing National Government Subsidies for State Universities and Colleges.” PIDS Discussion Paper Series 2012-03, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, Makati City, January 2012. <https://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1203.pdf>.

globally, Philippine HEIs, especially those that engage extensively with foreign HEIs for collaboration in research or transnational education, will face increasing pressure to become comparable with their peers abroad in gaining recognition as “research universities.”

Since 1994, CHED has continuously invested in scholarships to support further faculty development.<sup>6</sup> In its capacity as the regulatory body overseeing HEI quality, CHED imposes the requirement through the Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education (MORPHE)<sup>7</sup> and provides incentives for increasing the proportion of faculty with graduate degrees by awarding academic programs with Centers of Excellence and Development (COE/COD) statuses and through the recognition of autonomous and deregulated statuses to private HEIs.

### Educational attainment of faculty in Philippine HEIs

As of 2016, out of the 151,252 faculty across 2,153 HEIs in the country, 53% have graduate degrees, with 40% having master’s and 13% having doctorate degrees. The number of faculty with graduate qualifications improved significantly since 1998 (see Table 1), representing a 61-percentage-point increase in a span of twenty years. Relative to our neighbors, however, this still falls short in comparison with Malaysia and Vietnam, where 69% and 60% of faculty have graduate degrees, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1.** Highest educational attainment of HEI faculty, 1998–2016<sup>9</sup>

Degree	1998	2005	2010	2016
Bachelor’s	67%	56%	50%	46%
Master’s	25%	34%	39%	40%
Doctorate	8%	10%	11%	13%
Total with Graduate Degrees	33%	44%	50%	53%

Across HEIs (see Table 2), the highest percentage of doctorate degree holders is in SUCs (39%), followed by private non-sectarian HEIs (37%).<sup>10</sup> Local universities and colleges (LUCs), or those established through an enabling local ordinance and are funded by local government units, have the lowest share at only 4%. Despite the CHED requirement that all faculty members must have at least master’s degrees in order to be regularized, a large share

of faculty in private non-sectarian institutions (42%) and in SUCs (36%) do not have graduate degrees. Overall, 46% of all faculty members have bachelor’s degrees only.

**Table 2.** Percentage distribution of educational attainment by type of school, AY 2016–2017

HEI Type	Bachelor’s	Master’s	Doctorate
SUCs	36%	33%	39%
LUCs	6%	5%	4%
Private Sectarian	15%	21%	20%
Private Non-Sectarian	42%	41%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%

By discipline, the lion’s share of faculty with graduate degrees (master’s and doctorate) are in education (36.2%) and in business administration (21.1%). Combined, these two disciplines account for 57% of faculty with graduate degrees in the country. In contrast, the highest proportion of faculty *without* graduate degrees are in maritime (94%), followed by law (82%), architecture (77%), service trades (75%), and engineering (68%). These numbers highlight the diversity of programs at the tertiary level, where, on one hand, the importance of doctorate degrees are evident (such as programs in the social sciences and natural sciences), and on the other, industry practice and experience arguably takes precedence.

### Insufficient supply of graduate degree programs

There is a myriad of possible reasons for the lack of graduate degree-holders among HEI faculty. It could be a chronic shortage of supply in terms of advanced degree graduates, or that there are many graduates but few who want to teach in HEIs, or issues of weak recruitment and retention of faculty. This matter deserves closer investigation; however, given data constraints, the only aspect that can be investigated is the availability of graduate programs.

The higher education sector has the unique problem of having to rely on itself as the source of both demand and supply of graduate degree holders. It requires a corps of faculty with doctorates specializing in a specific field to offer a doctorate program, and given the shortage of

<sup>6</sup> In support of this, scholarship programs for higher education faculty have been a mainstay in CHED since the 1990s. Among these include the Engineering-Science Education Program (ESEP) in 1991, College Faculty Development Fund (CFDF) in 1996, Mindanao Advanced Education Program (MAEP) in 1997, the CHED Higher Education Development Project-Faculty Development Program (HEDP-FDP) from 2004 to 2009 and its Phase 2 from 2010 to 2016, the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Science and Engineering Graduate Scholarship (PGMASEGS) in 2006, and most recently, the K to 12 Transition Program from 2016 to 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Commission on Higher Education, *Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education* (Quezon City, 2008), art. 8, sec. 235, p. 30. <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Manual-of-Regulations-for-Private-Higher-Education.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> CHED Memorandum Order No. 3, Series 2016

<sup>9</sup> Note that this table includes figures for the University of the Philippines (UP) System.

<sup>10</sup> Non-sectarian institutions are mostly colleges or universities not affiliated with religious organizations and could either be stock or non-stock. As of 2016, there are 909 such institutions, 87% of which are considered small, with less than 2,000 students.

such faculty in the sector as a whole, the limited number of programs becomes the main constraint against the expansion of doctorate degree holders.

We reviewed the number and distribution of doctorate programs in the country by discipline (see Table 3) and highlight two key findings: first, that the most prolific doctorate programs in the country are education (33.4%) and business administration (26.6%), which is consistent with our earlier finding that most graduate degree holders in the country are also from these two disciplines; and second, that there is a clear divide in doctorate degree offerings between public and private institutions, where SUCs offer most programs in agriculture (92%)

**Table 3.** Distribution of doctorate programs in the country, by discipline, AY 2016–2017<sup>11</sup>

Discipline	Public	Private	% of Total
Education Science and Teacher Training	50%	50%	33.4%
Business Administration and Related	39%	61%	26.6%
Humanities	33%	67%	9.1%
Agricultural, Forestry, and Fisheries	92%	8%	7.0%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	26%	74%	4.0%
Natural Science	55%	45%	4.0%
Religion and Theology	0%	100%	3.6%
Other Disciplines <sup>12</sup>	67%	33%	3.1%
Engineering	53%	47%	2.4%
Medical and Allied	33%	67%	1.5%
Mathematics	75%	25%	1.3%
IT-Related	13%	87%	1.2%
Mass Communication and Documentation	43%	57%	1.1%
Home Economics	50%	50%	0.5%
Fine and Applied Arts	20%	80%	0.4%
Law and Jurisprudence	0%	100%	0.3%
Trade, Craft, and Industrial	100%	0%	0.2%
General	100%	0%	0.1%
Architectural and Town-Planning	100%	0%	0.1%
Service Trades	0%	100%	0.1%

Source: Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

**Table 4.** Distribution by discipline of HEI faculty with graduate degrees, AY 2016–2017

Discipline	Number <sup>13</sup>	% Within Discipline	% of Total	Student Enrollment
Education Science and Teacher Training	26,373	62.9%	36.2%	740,713
Business Administration and Related	15,325	65.5%	21.1%	921,324
Medical and Allied	4,451	42.1%	6.1%	203,561
Humanities	3,919	58.2%	5.4%	40,753
Engineering	3,353	31.7%	4.6%	448,550
IT-Related	3,127	38.3%	4.3%	398,765
Social and Behavioral Sciences	2,932	43.8%	4.0%	114,834
Other Disciplines <sup>14</sup>	2,530	42.2%	3.5%	212,709
Natural Science	2,492	42.8%	3.4%	34,923
Agricultural, Forestry, and Fisheries	2,399	61.1%	3.3%	127,287
Religion and Theology	1,558	81.3%	2.1%	8,351
Mathematics	1,523	59.8%	2.1%	14,109
Mass Communication & Documentation	715	39.1%	1.0%	36,527
Law and Jurisprudence	475	17.7%	0.7%	23,239
Fine and Applied Arts	442	42.0%	0.6%	16,324
General	329	35.7%	0.5%	7,614
Architectural and Town-Planning	265	23.0%	0.4%	40,238
Home Economics	242	53.2%	0.3%	5,960
Service Trades	222	25.3%	0.3%	73,905
Maritime	68	5.9%	0.1%	119,387
Trade, Craft, and Industrial	37	34.3%	0.1%	411
NDA	8,436	66.4%	11.6%	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>72,777</b>			

Source: Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

<sup>11</sup> Note that the table classifies programs using the Philippine Standard Classification of Education (PSCED) which cluster various programs and disciplines under respective subheaders. For example, Physical Science is under the subheader on Natural Sciences, while Public Administration is under the subheader Business Administration and Related. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of programs remain under “Other Disciplines.”

<sup>12</sup> “Other Disciplines” include Community Development, Criminology and Police Administration, Ecology, Environment Planning/Management, Environmental Science, Extension Service Management, Human Resource Development and Planning, Livelihood Management, Multicultural Community Development, Participatory Development, Personnel and Human Resources Management, Rural Development, Social Development, Social Services, Social Work, Women Development, other Civil Security and Military, and other Education-related degrees.

<sup>13</sup> Includes master’s and doctorate degree holders

<sup>14</sup> See note 12 above.

and mathematics (75%), while private HEIs offer most programs in information technology (87%) and social and behavioral sciences (74%).

### Ratio of PhD faculty to students

The availability of doctorates varies widely by discipline, shown in Table 5 as a metric of doctorates per 100 enrolled students. For example, while in total, education has the highest number of faculty with doctorate degrees (8,149 or 40% of all PhD faculty in the country), when compared to the number of students enrolled in that program overall (in 2016, there were 740,713 students enrolled in education programs), the number pales in comparison, with a ratio of only 1.10 Ph.D. faculty per 100 students.

Using this ratio, data shows that the humanities have the most number, with 4 PhD faculty per 100 students. Meanwhile, in the STEM (science, technology,

**Table 5.** Distribution of doctorate degree holders among HEI faculty (by discipline), AY 2016–2017<sup>15</sup>

Discipline	Number	% Total	% Discipline	Ph.D. per 100 students
Education Science and Teacher Training	8,149	40.4%	19.4%	1.10
Business Administration and Related	3,168	15.7%	13.5%	0.34
Humanities	1,582	7.9%	23.5%	3.88
Agricultural, Forestry, and Fisheries	953	4.7%	24.3%	0.75
Social and Behavioral Sciences	912	4.5%	13.6%	0.79
Other Disciplines	715	3.5%	11.9%	0.34
Natural Science	666	3.3%	11.4%	1.91
Engineering	422	2.1%	4.0%	0.09
Religion and Theology	370	1.8%	19.3%	4.43
Mathematics	319	1.6%	12.5%	2.26
Medical and Allied	272	1.3%	2.6%	0.13
IT-Related	213	1.1%	2.6%	0.05
Mass Communication and Documentation	85	0.4%	4.7%	0.23
<b>Philippines Total</b>	<b>20,149</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>0.56</b>

Source: Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

<sup>15</sup> Note that the table classifies programs using the Philippine Standard Classification of Education (PSCED).

<sup>16</sup> A clear outlier are theological schools, of which there are 120, and produce many doctorate degree graduates. While technically considered tertiary education institutions, these schools serve mostly those on track for priestly or religious life, and not the general public.

<sup>17</sup> CHED Memorandum Order No. 58, Series 2017

engineering and mathematics) fields, the ratios are varied: 0.09 for engineering, 1.91 in natural Science, and 2.26 for mathematics. For the social sciences, the ratio is less than 1 (0.79).<sup>16</sup>

### Top 10 public and private HEIs with highest number of doctorate degree holders

Comparing the top 10 HEIs with the highest percentage of faculty with PhDs from public and private institutions, two different scenarios emerge. For SUCs, Philippine Normal University has the highest percentage of doctorate degree holders (40%), followed by Cebu Normal University (30%), Benguet State University (29%), and the University of the Philippines (29%). These institutions are also among the biggest SUCs in terms of student enrollment share, and the top two universities both specialize in teacher education, a discipline with a high number of doctorate faculty.

Looking more closely at the 3,757 faculty members across the ten campuses of the University of the Philippines (UP) System, the country's premier public research university, 40% have bachelor's degrees only, faring only 6 percent better than the national average, while 37% have master's degrees and 23% have doctorate degrees. The most number of Ph.D. holders are in the Diliman (417) and Los Baños (262) campuses, which are also the biggest constituent units of the UP System.

For private HEIs, Table 6 shows that the highest-ranking private HEI is Pacific InterContinental College (52.5%), followed by Colegio de San Juan de Letran (48.4%) and Saint Anthony Mary Claret College (44.2%). It is notable that unlike public HEIs, a majority of the top-ranking private HEIs are relatively small, and only four of these are classified by CHED as autonomous or deregulated.<sup>17</sup>

### Policy Recommendations

#### *The challenge of increasing graduate degree holders in higher education faculty*

The imperative for the national government, through CHED, to continue and sustain funding for faculty development is clear. Further, the disparity across disciplines and regions must be studied and approached carefully if we are to overcome prevailing inequities. As we have seen, most graduate programs remain concentrated in education and in business administration, perpetuating a vicious cycle of "more of the same" training, while inhibiting the expansion of faculty expertise in other key disciplines. These limitations in geography and discipline



**Table 6.** Top 10 public and private HEIs with the highest percentage of faculty with PhDs, AY 2016–2017

Rank	Public HEIs	%
1	Philippine Normal University	40.0
2	Cebu Normal University	30.3
3	Benguet State University	29.3
4	University of the Philippines System	28.7
5	Central Luzon State University	26.3
6	Visayas State University	25.5
7	Nueva Vizcaya State University	24.9
8	Kalinga Apayao State College	24.4
9	Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University	24.4
10	Ifugao State University	22.4

  

Rank	Private HEIs	%
1	Pacific InterContinental College	52.4
2	Colegio de San Juan de Letran	48.4
3	Saint Anthony Mary Claret College	44.2
4	St. Paul University–Quezon City	41.1
5	Baguio Central University	40.2
6	Imus Institute	39.7
7	San Sebastian College–Recoletos	38.0
8	University of the East–Manila	36.9
9	University of Asia and the Pacific	35.2
10	Philippine College of Criminology	34.0

Source: Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

will remain a binding constraint in significantly increasing the number of doctorate graduates, especially if funding for scholarships is confined to local programs.

### ***There has not been enough government support for foreign scholarships for faculty***

While there are ongoing efforts of government to support faculty currently through scholarships in partnership with foreign organizations<sup>18</sup> through CHED’s K to 12 Transition Program, it is imperative for the government to invest much larger sums in faculty development to support foreign scholarships. It is the only means to gain expertise in priority disciplines that are underdeveloped locally and to become competitive in the region.

### ***There is a need to strategically develop research universities among Philippine HEIs***

Based on an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study, the Philippines has one of

the lowest graduate to undergraduate education ratios in the region, at 1:27, higher only than Lao PDR (1:33) and Myanmar (1:45), and much lower than Singapore (1:4), Malaysia (1:6), Thailand (1:7), Indonesia (1:12),<sup>19</sup> where most, if not all of our universities, are teaching universities and not research universities. Due to the large population of undergraduate students, most faculty members are full-time, if not overloaded, for teaching bachelor’s degree programs, instead of handling graduate-level classes or conducting research.

Both of these factors—increasing the proportion of graduate students in a university, and providing faculty with enough time and support to pursue research, publish, and engage in discourse at the global stage—are among the most heavily weighted indicators used by world university rankings. If any of our universities are to have a fighting chance in competing with leading regional universities, there must be focused efforts to support graduate programs. That being said, the drive for expanding graduate faculty and the growth of research productivity must be, in parallel, differentiated by HEI type and by discipline.

Then should all HEIs, regardless of mandate, be expected to have a high proportion of Ph.D. faculty? There must be room in the sector for HEIs to be considered and to remain as teaching institutions rather than research institutions, (private and LUCs that offer mostly professional courses, for example). CHED can consider differentiating its policies and requirements for the awarding of distinctions based on HEI type, in a way that gives appropriate incentives for HEIs with different primary mandates, creating various paths toward excellence. A singular incentive path toward research university status, if applied to all HEIs, is infeasible in this country where there are over 2,000 HEIs, half of whom have less than 2,000 students. Alternate mechanisms for recognition that are more fit for teaching and professional schools should thus be also designed.

### ***Review and enhance graduate programs in the country***

In 2014, a study by the Task Force on Graduate Education Review (TFGER) initiated by CHED reported that graduate education in the country is “generally more of the same college-level education, without clear distinctions in substantive content and pedagogical difference between graduate offerings from their similar disciplinary offerings in college-levels.”

Ultimately, while numbers matter in terms of higher educational attainment of faculty, particularly the percentage of faculty with doctorate degrees, this

<sup>18</sup> Some of these are the Fulbright Commission in the Philippines, Australia Awards, Newton Fund (in partnership with the British Council), and Campus France, among others.

<sup>19</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Higher Education Asia Graduate University Research*, 2014.

will only count if the doctorate degrees pursued are able to genuinely deepen academic rigor and provide substantive content expertise, and enable the faculty to teach better and engage in research and extension. Following the revision and enhancement of policies, standards, and guidelines (PSGs) for undergraduate

programs being implemented beginning this June 2018, it is important for CHED to similarly assess and undertake a review of graduate programs, to ensure that master's and doctorate programs offered in the country are of better quality.

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The Editor-in-Chief and the Program Editors ensure that the policy briefs contain research findings on issues that are aligned with the core agenda of the programs under the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

The responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief and the Program Editors is towards high standards of scholarship; the generation of new knowledge that can be utilized for the good of the public; and the dissemination of such information.

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**University of the Philippines**  
**CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND**  
**DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (UP CIDS)**

Established in 1985 by UP President Edgardo Angara, the **UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS)** is a policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

Through Executive Order 9 issued on September 24, 1985, then UP President Edgardo J. Angara laid out the framework for the realization of his vision for the University to be able to achieve the following objectives:

- a. Develop, organize, and manage research issues of national significance. Such issues, because of their importance and inherent complexity, require an integrative and collaborative approach and also more sophisticated research methodologies and skills;
- b. Encourage and support research and study on these issues by various units of the University and individual scholars;
- c. Secure funding from public and private persons and agencies; and
- d. Ensure that the research outputs and recommendations of the Center are published and openly disseminated

(Source: Executive Order 9, September 24, 1985).

Pursuant to The UP Charter of 2008 (RA 9500), UP CIDS anchors its endeavors to aid the University in the fulfillment of its role as a research university in various fields of expertise and specialization. Research and/or policy units whose core themes address current national policy and development needs are designed and implemented.

UP CIDS partakes in the University's leadership in public service. This is carried out through the dissemination of research-based knowledge through fora, symposia, and conferences. These research activities will be initiated by the nine (9) programs under UP CIDS.

