

Research Article

Bridging Policy and Practice: The Status of Bicol University's Graduate Education Under CHED's New Graduate Education Framework

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ABSTRACT

Graduate education plays a crucial role in shaping a nation's academic and research landscape, particularly in producing highly skilled professionals and scholars. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has issued CMO No. 15 series of 2019 which prescribes the policies, standards, and guidelines for graduate programs in the Philippines. This policy study examined the status of Bicol University's graduate education in response to this new framework, focusing on program alignment, institutional challenges, and opportunities for development. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach, the study assessed the extent to which Bicol University's graduate programs comply with CHED's updated policies and standards. Key areas of analysis included curriculum structure, faculty qualifications, research productivity, accreditation status, among others. Findings indicate that while Bicol University has made significant progress in aligning its graduate education with CHED's mandates, challenges persist. These include inadequate faculty complement, limited faculty research engagement, limited publication, and the need for more strategic industry and international partnerships. Additionally, compliance with new accreditation and quality assurance measures requires further institutional support and policy refinements. Based on these findings, the study provides strategic recommendations for improving the implementation of CHED's New Graduate Education Framework at Bicol University. Key recommendations include strengthening faculty complement, enhancing faculty research and publication support, increasing institutional funding for graduate research, fostering collaborative programs with industry and global institutions, and continuously refining policies to ensure sustainable program development. By addressing these areas, Bicol University can enhance the quality and competitiveness of its graduate programs, ultimately contributing to national higher education goals and international academic standards. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on policy implementation in graduate education, particularly in bridging regulatory frameworks with institutional realities. It underscores the importance of proactive institutional strategies in navigating policy transitions while ensuring that graduate education remains responsive to both national and global academic demands..

Keywords: Graduate education; Policies and standards; Graduate faculty; Research; Publication

1. INTRODUCTION

The state of graduate education in the Philippines has been a subject of concern in recent years. Many graduate programs have been criticized for lacking rigor, relevance, and responsiveness to the needs of the labor market. Undoubtedly, proliferation of substandard graduate programs has compromised the integrity of higher education institutions (HEIs) which offer these programs.

To address above concerns, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued CMO No. 15, s. 2019 which outlines the new policies and standards for graduate programs in the Philippines. The new policies aim to enhance the quality, relevance, and responsiveness of graduate programs, and to ensure that they aligned with the country's development priorities and needs of the labor market. The issuance of CMO No. 15, s. 2019 marks a significant step towards reforming the state of graduate education in the Philippines.

The CMO includes several important features designed to enhance the quality and relevance of graduate education in the country. It mandates stricter requirements on faculty qualifications, research and publication of both graduate faculty and students,

curriculum design, and program delivery, aiming to cultivate a culture of academic excellence and innovation in Philippine graduate education. The CMO mandates that HEIs offering graduate education must ensure that they have the necessary faculty expertise to support the offering of graduate programs. Moreover, the requirement for research publication for both graduate quality and students is also stressed in the policy guidelines. It specifically mandates that graduate students must publish in refereed journals as a prerequisite for graduation. The emphasis on research publication suggests that graduate faculty should have research experience and are capable of mentoring and guiding graduate students towards publication in refereed journals.

With the issuance of CMO No. 15, s. 2019, HEIs offering graduate programs have to reassess their programs to ensure compliance with the updated policies, standards, and guidelines. As the premier HEI in the Bicol Region and one of the top performing universities in the country, Bicol University (BU) has long been committed to providing high-quality graduate education that is responsive to national development goals and aligned with global academic standards. CHED's new graduate education framework presents both challenges and opportunities for BU as it seeks to maintain its relevance and leadership in graduate education.

The policy reforms introduced by CHED in graduate education necessitates a critical evaluation of BU's existing graduate programs to ensure compliance and competitiveness. It is along this line that this policy study was undertaken to examine the current status of BU's graduate education program in relation to CHED's policies, standards, and guidelines for graduate programs. It specifically attempted to determine the extent to which BU's existing programs comply with CHED's new requirements. A key focus of the assessment was the identification of gaps and areas for improvement in programs design and curriculum structure, faculty qualifications, research productivity, and student support services. In addition to assessing compliance, the study explored the challenges faced by BU in adapting to CHED's new policies and opportunities to strengthen its graduate education program.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive-evaluative research design to assess the status of BU's graduate education program in relation to CMO No. 15, s. 2019. The approach involved gathering and analyzing secondary data, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussion (FGD) during environmental scanning using SWOT analysis. The data collection focused on program compliance, faculty qualifications, research productivity, curriculum alignment, and institutional support services. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, means, and percentages; while qualitative data from FGD, KIIs, and document analysis were subjected to thematic analysis to extract key themes related to challenges, opportunities, and policy recommendations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Current Status of BU Graduate Education Program

A. Organization and Management

The Bicol University was created on June 21, 1969 by virtue of RA 5521 to give professional and technical training and provide advanced and specialized instruction in literature, philosophy, science and arts, besides providing for the promotion of scientific and technological researches. Section 6(e) of RA 5521 also required the Board of Regents to immediately establish a post-graduate course in liberal arts and sciences or in education leading to a master's degree.

Operating in the spirit of its charter, BU organized its Graduate School in 1971 through BOR Resolution No. 39 series of 1971. Thus, on June 1971, the BU Graduate School (BUGS) welcomed its first batch of 473 graduate students (1971-1972 Annual Report).

The BUGS, which exercises administrative jurisdiction over all graduate programs of BU following a semi-matrix organizational structure, is headed by a Dean and is assisted by a College Secretary. It is now operating on a fully decentralized set-up in accordance with the provisions of BOR Resolution No. 42, series of 1999 and BOR Resolution No. 080 series of 2004 where graduate programs were decentralized to selected colleges/units with in-house capability. This BOR resolution redefined the role of the Graduate School according to a policy framework where it will institute and administer the programs while receiving units will implement, supervise, and coordinate the decentralized graduate programs.

B. Program Offerings

From an initial offering of three (3) master's degree programs upon its creation in June 1971, it has metamorphosed into its present state with a total curricular offering of 46 degree programs, seven (7) of which are in the doctoral level and 39 in the

master's level (see Table 1). At present, seven (7) graduate degree programs, one (1) doctoral and six (6) master's, are being offered via distance learning mode under the Bicol University Open University.

Following the provisions of BOR Resolution No. 42 series and BOR Resolution No. 080 series of 2004, graduate programs of BU are being offered through Delivering Academic Units (DAUs) which have the required faculty complement and facilities. A DAU, may engage the faculty members from other academic units as affiliate faculty or from other agencies as adjunct faculty in order to meet the faculty requirement of the program. There are 13 academic units which serve as DAUs of graduate degree programs in BU. The College of Education (CE) offers the most number of graduate degree programs with three (3) doctoral degrees and 14 master's degrees, followed by the Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development (JMRIGD) and BU Guinobatan with six (6) graduate degree programs each. These 12 academic units offer the graduate degree programs through the residential mode which require graduate students to be physically present in the classroom.

With the establishment of the BU Open University (BUOU), as authorized by BOR Resolution No. 24 series of 1997, three (3) of the five (5) approved graduate degree programs were offered through distance education mode in 2005, namely, Master in Management (MM), Master of Arts in Public Administration (MAPA), and Master in Local Government Administration (MLGM). Additional programs were offered by BUOU after the passing of BOR Resolution No. 236 series of 2017 such as Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management (Ed.D. ELM), Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management (MAELM), Master of Arts in English Education, and Master of Arts in Social Studies Education.

Table 1. Graduate degree programs being offered by Bicol University by delivering academic units

Delivering Academic Units	Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree
College of Education	1. Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management 2. Ph.D. in Educational Foundations 3. Ph.D. in Mathematics Education	1. M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management 2. M.A. in Biology Education 3. M.A. in Chemistry Education 4. M.A. in Physics Education 5. M.A. in Cultural Education 6. M.A. in English Education 7. M.A. in Filipino Education 8. M.A. in General Science Education 9. M.A. in Guidance and Counselling 10. M.A. in Mathematics Education 11. M.A. in Music Education 12. M.A. in Pre-School Education 13. M.A. in Reading Education 14. M.A. in Social Studies Education
College of Business Economics and Management		1. Master in Cooperative Management 2. Master in Economics 3. Master in Entrepreneurship 4. Master in Management 5. Master in Management (major in: Human Resource Management)
Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development	1. Ph.D. in Public Administration - Ph.D. in Development Management	1. Master of Public Administration 2. Master in Public Administration (major in: Health Emergency and Disaster Management) 3. Master in Public Administration (major in: Public Procurement) 6. Master in Local Government Management
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy	2. Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration	4. M.A. in Peace and Security Studies
College of Arts and Letters	3. Ph.D. in Filipino	1. M.A. in Literature 5. M.A. in Filipino
College of Industrial Technology	4.	2. M.A. in Industrial Technology (major in: TLE and Instructional Technology)
College of Nursing	5.	1. M.A. in Nursing 3. M.A. in Nursing Education (non-thesis)

Delivering Academic Units	Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree
Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation		1. M.A. in Physical Education
Institute of Design and Architecture		1. M.S. in Architecture
BU Guinobatan		1. M.S. in Agriculture (major in: Agronomy, Animal Science, Crop Production, and Animal Production) 2. Master in Rural Development 3. M.S. in Biodiversity and Environmental Management 4. M.S. in Sustainable Food Systems
BU Tabaco		1. M.S. in Fisheries (major in: Aquaculture and Coastal Resource Management) 2. M.S. in Fisheries Technology
BU Open University	1. Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management	1. M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management 2. M.A. in English Education 3. M.A. in Social Studies Education 4. Master in Management 5. M.A. in Public Administration 6. Master in Local Government Administration

C. Program Accreditation and CHED Recognition Status

As shown in Table 2, BU has 45 accreditable graduate programs as of February 2025. Majority of these programs (51.11%) or 23 of the 45 accreditable programs had already passed different accreditation levels as follows: Level 4- 1; Level 3- 8; Level 2- 13; Level 1- 1; and Candidate Status- 22.

The MA in Public Administration is the lone Level 4 accredited program. Level 3 accredited programs include: Ph.D. in Public Administration, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management, Master's in Management, M.A. in Music Education, M.A. in Filipino Education, M.A. in English Education, M.A. in Mathematics Education, and

Table 2. Accreditation status of graduate programs as of February 2025

Accreditation Level	Number
Candidate Status	22
Level 1	1
Level 2	13
Level 3	8
Level 4	1
Total Number of Accredited Programs	23
Accreditable Programs	45
Percentage	51.11

Source: BU IQA Office

Table 3. COPC status of graduate programs as of February 2025

Delivering Academic Unit/Degree Program	Number of Programs	Number of Programs w/ COPC	Number of Programs w/o COPC
<u>Doctoral Degree</u>			
College of Education	3	-	3
College of Arts and Letters	1	-	1
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy	1	-	1
Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development	2	2	-
Subtotal	7	2	5
<u>Master's Degree</u>			
College of Education	14	-	14
College of Arts and Letters	2	-	2
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy	1	-	1
Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development	4	1	3
College of Nursing	2	-	2
College of Science	2	1	1
College of Business Economics and Management	5	2	3

College of Industrial Technology	1	-	1
Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation	1	-	1
Institute of Design and Architecture	1	-	1
BU Guinobatan	4	-	4
BU Tabaco	2	-	2
Subtotal	39	4	35
Total	46	6	40

M.A. in Industrial Education. The 13 Level 2 accredited programs include: Ph.D. in Development Management, Ph.D. in Educational Foundations, Ph.D. in Filipino, Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration, M.A. in Literature, Master in Filipino, M.A. in Nursing, M.A. in Physical Education, Master in Economics, M.S. in Agriculture, M.A. in Peace and Security Studies, and Master in Rural Development. The lone Level 1 accredited program is the Master in Public Administration (major in Health Emergency and Disaster Response). The remaining 22 graduate programs are candidates for Level 1 accreditation.

As of February 2025, only six (6) out of the 46 graduate degree programs, two (2) for the doctoral and four (4) for the master's, had been awarded their Certificate of Program Compliance (COPC) by CHED. These are: Ph.D. in Public Administration, Ph.D. in Development Management, Master in Management, Master in Management (major in Human Resource Management), Master in Information System, and Master of Public Administration.

Three (3) of the remaining five (2) doctoral programs which do not have yet COPC had been visited already by the Regional Quality Assurance Team (RQAT) and are required to submit compliance report to CHEDRO V not later than March 14, 2025. The remaining two doctoral programs have yet to submit their application.

For the 35 master's degree programs without COPC, 13 programs had been visited already by RQAT while application for COPC evaluation for 10 programs was already submitted to CHEDROV. Records at the IQA Office further revealed that online evaluation for six (6) programs had been completed while another one (1) is scheduled for online evaluation by the RQAT. The other programs are in various stages of the COPC process like compliance with faculty requirement, submission of compliance report, and review of compliance by experts.

D. Graduate Faculty Profile

As of February 2025, BU has a total of 186 graduate faculty consisting of 182 full-time faculty members from the 12 host colleges/units and four (4) part-time faculty members consisting of two (2) non-teaching personnel, one (1) Professor Emeritus, and the SUC President (see Table 5). For the purpose of this paper, a full-time faculty member is one who holds a permanent position and academic rank and is assigned a full teaching load every semester.

Out of the 182 full-time graduate faculty, one (1) has an academic rank of University Professor, 46 are full Professors, 98 are Associate Professors, 36 are Assistant Professors, and one (1) Instructor. Table 5 further shows that 143 of the 186 graduate faculty have their Ph.D./Ed.D. degrees, while 20 are still working on their doctoral studies. Table 5 further shows that 21 graduate faculty have MA/MS as their highest educational attainment.

Table 5. Distribution of BU graduate faculty according to highest educational attainment and academic rank/position.

Academic Rank/Position	Highest Educational Attainment				Total
	MA/MS	MA/MS units	Ph.D./Ed.D.	With Ph.D./Ed.D. units	
Instructor I	1	-	-	-	1
Assistant Professor I	1	1	4	1	7
Assistant Professor II	2	-	2	2	6
Assistant Professor III	3	1	9	1	14
Assistant Professor IV	3	-	4	2	9
Associate Professor I	3	-	13	4	20
Associate Professor II	4	-	8	2	14
Associate Professor III	-	-	9	1	10
Associate Professor IV	2	-	12	2	16
Associate Professor V	1	-	33	4	38
Professor II	-	-	5	1	6
Professor III	-	-	12	-	12
Professor IV	-	-	9	-	9
Professor V	-	-	2	-	2

Professor VI	-	-	17	-	17
University Professor	-	-	1	-	1
Administrative Officer V	1	-	-	-	1
Supervising Admin. Officer	-	-	1	-	1
Professor Emeritus	-	-	1	-	1
SUC President IV	-	-	1	-	1
Total	21	2	143	20	186

E. Graduate Faculty Research and Publication

Research Engagement. Graduate faculty are expected to have research engagement because it is a fundamental pillar of graduate education. Their active involvement in research ensures the continuous advancement of knowledge and allows them to bring cutting-edge developments and methodologies into the classroom. Their engagement in research also enhances the academic rigor and relevance of the curriculum.

Table 6. Distribution of graduate faculty per mother college/unit with and without research engagement as of CY 2023.

Mother Unit	No. of Graduate Faculty				
		With Research	%	Without Research	%
College of Education	36	21	58.33	14	38.89
College of Business Economics and Management	17	7	41.18	9	52.94
College of Industrial Technology	10	5	50.00	5	50.00
College of Arts and Letters	19	11	57.89	8	42.11
College of Social Science and Philosophy	11	7	63.64	4	36.36
College of Nursing	7	4	57.14	3	42.86
College of Science	22	14	63.64	8	36.36
Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development	9	2	22.22	7	77.78
Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation	5	-	-	5	100.00
Institute of Design and Architecture	3	1	33.33	2	66.67
BU Guinobatan	16	11	68.75	5	31.25
BU Tabaco	9	6	66.67	3	33.33
BU Polangui	1	1	100.00	-	-
BU Gubat	1	1	100.00	-	-
BU Open University	7	4	57.14	3	42.86
OVRPDE- Research and Dev't Management Division	5	4	80.00	1	20.00
OVRPDE-Extension Management Division	3	1	33.33	2	66.67
OVRPDE-Regional Center for Science, and Math Education	2	2	100.00	-	-
General Administration and Support Services	3	1	33.33	2	66.67

Source: RDMD

Table 7. Status of implementation of researches implemented in 2023 per college/unit.

Mother Unit	Number of Researches Implemented	Status	
		Ongoing	Completed
College of Education	21	17	4
College of Business Economics and Management	7	2	5
College of Industrial Technology	5	4	1
College of Arts and Letters	11	9	2
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy	7	7	0
College of Nursing	4	4	0
College of Science	14	11	3
Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance and Development	2	-	2

Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation	-	-	-
Institute of Design and Architecture	1	-	1
BU Guinobatan	11	8	3
BU Tabaco	6	6	-
BU Polangui	1	-	1
BU Gubat	1	1	-
BU Open University	4	1	3
OVRPDE-Research and Development Management Division	4	2	2
OVRPDE-Extension Management Division	1	-	1
OVRPDE-Regional Center for Science, Mathematics Education	1	-	1
General Administration and Support Services	1	1	-
Total	102	73	29

Source: RDMD

aligning it with current trends and scholarly debates. Moreover, their research experience equips them to provide meaningful guidance to their thesis/dissertation advisees/mentees in formulating research questions, designing methodologies, and interpreting data.

Along the foregoing premises, the study sought to find out the extent of graduate faculty's engagement in research. The study revealed that majority of the graduate faculty (55.38%) had research engagement as of CY 2023, either as project leader or study leader. As shown in Table 6, only the graduate faculty of the Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation (IPESR) had no research engagement as of CY 2023. The data further show that majority of the graduate faculty in eight (8) of the 13 DAUs of the Graduate School had research engagement as of CY 2023. BU Guineaman had the greatest number of graduate faculty engaged in research at 68.76%, followed by BU Tabaco with 66.67%, then by the College of Social Science and Philosophy and College of Science at 63.64% each.

As shown in Table 7, there were 102 researches which were implemented in CY 2023 involving graduate faculty. Majority of their researches (71.57) were still on-going while close to one-third were completed in CY 2023.

Research Publication of Graduate Faculty. Graduate are expected to have research publications because these serve as evidence of their academic credibility and expertise in the field. Engaging in research and publishing their work allows faculty members to remain in the forefront of knowledge, which enhances the quality and relevance of their teaching. Research publication is, therefore, a vital component of a graduate faculty's role in advancing scholarship and instruction.

With the foregoing considerations, the study also looked into the research productivity of graduate faculty in terms of papers published in refereed journals. As shown in Table 8, a total of 154 papers authored by graduate faculty were published in 72 journals for the period 2020-2024. There were two (2) journal categories where graduate faculty published their papers, namely, international journals and national journals. Majority of the papers (69.48%) or 107 out of 154 papers were published in international journals while the remainder (30.52%) were published in national journals. The journals where the papers were published were of five (5) types, namely, refereed, non-refereed, CHED-JIP recognized, book chapter, and SCOPUS-listed. Refereed journals had the greatest number of papers published with almost 40.00%, followed by CHED-JIP recognized journal with 27.27%, and non-refereed journals with 18.18%. The remaining papers were either published either in SCOPUS-listed journals or as book chapter with 7.79% each. Of the 72 journals, the BU R&D Journal had the highest number of papers published with 41 out of 154 papers. The BU R&D Journal, which is published by BU, is CHED-JIP recognized national journal.

Table 9 shows the number of faculty per mother unit who had papers published for the period 2020-2024. Among the 13 DAUs of the Graduate School, the College of Science which had a total of 49 papers published, had the highest number of graduate faculty (68) with published papers. It is followed by BU Tabaco with 18 published papers involving 23 graduate faculty, and College of Education with 21 papers published involving 22 graduate faculty. The OVRPDE, which is not a DAU of the Graduate School, had a total of 32 graduate faculty with papers published during the same period. Overall, there were 193 graduate faculty who were able to publish 154 papers. The data implies multiple authorship where one graduate faculty is able to publish several papers credited to his/her name and one (1) published paper having several authors.

Table 8. Number of papers published per year and per mother unit.

Mother Unit	Number of Publication per Year					Total
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
College of Education	-	12	1	1	7	21
College of Business Economics and Management	-	-	-	1	3	4
College of Industrial Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-
College of Arts and Letters	-	1	-	-	1	2
College of Social Science and Philosophy	1	4	5	1	4	15
College of Nursing	-	2	4	1	-	7

College of Science	6	3	11	5	24	49
College of Engineering	-	1	2	1	1	5
Jesse M. Robredo Inst. of Governance and Dev't.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Design and Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Guinobatan	1	-	1	1	1	4
BU Tabaco	3	2	7	4	2	18
BU Polangui	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Gubat	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Open University	-	-	-	-	3	3
OVRPDE	5	6	5	8	2	26
Total	16	31	36	23	48	154

Source: OVRPDE-PKMD

Table 9. Number of graduate faculty with publication per year and per mother unit.

Mother Unit	Number of Publication per Year					Total
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
College of Education	1	12	1	1	7	22
College of Business Economics and Management	-	-	-	1	5	6
College of Industrial Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-
College of Arts and Letters	-	1	-	-	2	3
College of Social Science and Philosophy	1	4	7	1	5	18
College of Nursing	-	2	4	2	-	8
College of Science	7	5	11	7	38	68
JMRIGD/College of Engineering	-	1	2	1	-	4
JMRIGD/College of Social Sciences and Philosophy	-	-	-	-	1	1
Institute of Physical Education, Sports, and Recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Design and Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Guinobatan	1	-	2	-	1	4
BU Tabaco	3	3	7	4	6	23
BU Polangui	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Gubat	-	-	-	-	-	-
BU Open University	-	-	1	-	3	4
OVRPDE	6	11	5	6	4	32
Total	19	39	40	23	72	193

Source: OVRPDE-PKMD

F. Enrolment**Table 10.** Total enrollment by type of degree program, mode of delivery, and year

Degree Program/Mode of Delivery	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem
<i><u>Residential Mode</u></i>										
Doctoral Degree	319	308	306	277	260	273	243	274	253	240
Master's Degree	1,583	1,525	1,835	1,637	1,666	1,565	1,701	1,675	1,691	1,539
<i><u>Distance Mode</u></i>										
Doctoral Degree	0	32	32	35	32	34	30	25	22	28
Master's Degree	0	263	363	279	290	259	236	233	211	184
Total for Doctoral Degree	319	340	338	312	292	307	273	299	275	268
Total for Master's Degree	1,583	1,788	2,198	1,916	1,956	1,824	1,937	1,908	1,902	1,723

Table 9 presents the total number of students enrolled in doctoral and master's degree programs by mode of delivery – residential and distance – from SY 2020 to the first semester of SY 2024. A close examination of the data reveals several notable

trends in graduate education over the five-year period. For the residential mode, doctoral degree enrolment during the first semester of 2020 started at 319 and gradually declined over time, reaching 240 in the second semester of 2024. This steady decrease may be due to some factors like diminishing interest, constraints in pursuing face-to-face doctoral studies, presence of other higher education institutions offering graduate studies, and other factors which the BU Graduate School should look into. Similarly, while master's degree enrolment under the residential mode saw a peak of 1,835 in the first semester of 2021, the numbers have slightly decreased over the years, settling at 1,539 in the second semester of 2024. This suggests that although traditional learning remained strong in the earlier years, there has been a gradual shift or drop in enrolment in recent semesters.

In contrast, the distance mode experienced a notable upward trend, particularly for master's programs. The data shows that master's programs under distance mode, which had no enrollees in 2020, quickly grew to 263 in the first semester of 2021 and continued to rise, peaking at 299 in the first semester of 2023. This increase indicates a growing preference for flexible learning arrangements, possibly accelerated by the COVID 19 pandemic and its lingering effects on higher education. The doctoral degree program under distance mode, introduced in 2021, has had but minimal but consistent enrolment figures, ranging from 30 to 35 students each semester, reflecting a modest uptake.

When aggregated, total enrolment for doctoral degrees initially decreased from 319 in the first semester of 2020 to 292 in the second semester of 2022 but saw a slight recovery in 2023 before declining again in 2024. This fluctuating pattern may point to changing dynamics in graduate school participation or challenges specific to doctoral programs. Meanwhile, total enrolment in master's programs increased significantly from 1,583 in 2020 to a peak of 2,198 in 2021, followed a slight and steady decrease, reaching 1,723 by the second semester of 2024. Despite this decline, the total number of enrollees in the master's programs remains comparatively high, indicating sustained interest in advanced professional education.

Overall, the data highlights a gradual transition in graduate education, with distance learning gaining ground, especially at the master's level. The increased accessibility and flexibility offered by distance programs may continue to reshape enrolment patterns in the years to come. At the same time, the decreasing numbers in residential mode, particularly in the doctoral programs, call for a deeper analysis and programmatic adjustments to meet the evolving needs of graduate learners.

G. Graduation

Table 11. Number of graduates by type of degree program, mode of delivery, and year

Degree Program/Mode of Delivery	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem
<u>Residential Mode</u>										
Doctoral Degree	5	15	5	7	3	20	3	43	7	0
Master's Degree	25	5	13	44	22	104	37	238	62	0
<u>Distance Mode</u>										
Doctoral Degree	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6	1	0
Master's Degree	0	3	1	1	2	9	4	21	0	0
Total for Doctoral Degree	5	15	5	7	3	23	3	49	8	0
Total for Master's Degree	25	8	14	45	24	113	41	259	62	0

As shown in Table 11, a clear upward trajectory is observed, particularly in the number of master's degree graduates in the residential mode, which peaked in 2023 with a total of 275 graduates (37 in the first semester and 238 in the second semester). Similarly, doctoral degrees also saw a significant rise in 2023, culminating in 49 graduates, before dropping sharply in 2024.

The pattern of graduation aligns with previously discussed enrolment trends, where a notable surge in enrolments during the years 2021 and 2022 likely contributed to the peak graduation figures in 2023. The sudden decline in 2024, especially in the second semester, may reflect a gap in new enrolments during the pandemic years or a longer time-to-completion for those enrolled later. Interestingly, distance mode programs have yet to produce significant number of graduates, with zero graduates reported in certain school years, indicating structural and policy challenges in delivering programs through this mode.

These graduation outcomes suggest that while enrolment initiatives have successfully increased the number of students in residential graduate programs, there is a need to strengthen support systems to ensure consistent graduation rates and to enhance distance education delivery for broader accessibility.

Compliance of BU Graduate Programs to CHED's New Graduate Education Framework

CHED's new graduate education framework, outlined in CMO No. 15, series of 2019, represents a significant shift in graduate education in the Philippines. It outlines the policies, standards, and guidelines for graduate programs, aligning it with international standards. This framework aims to enhance the quality and global competitiveness of higher education by

emphasizing research and innovation. The key areas of compliance which the study looked into are: (1) curriculum alignment; (2) faculty qualification and expertise; and (3) research engagement of faculty.

A. Curriculum Alignment

CMO No. 15, series of 2019 emphasizes the need for curriculum alignment in graduate programs to ensure they meet the new standards and guidelines. Specifically, graduate programs must align with the types specified in CMO No. 15 such as academic and professional tracks. Each track has distinct requirements and outcomes, ensuring that programs cater to different student needs and career goals. The CMO further recommends the minimum number of units for each degree program.

Table 12. Credit-unit distribution of graduate programs in Bicol University vs. CMO No. 15, series of 2019 recommendation

Graduate Program	Bicol University				CMO No. 15, s. 2019		
	Number of Programs	Course Work	Thesis/ Diss.	Total No. of Units	Course Work	Thesis/ Diss.	Total No. of Units
Doctoral Degree	5	48	12	60	24	12	36
	2	30	12	42			
Master's Degree (thesis)	1	39	6	45	24	6	30
	6	36	6	42			
	12	33	6	42			
	1	30	15	45			
	16	30	6	36			
	1	27	6	33			
	1	24	6	30			
Master's Degree (non-thesis)	1	30	0	30	30	3*	33

Note: The requirement is a capstone project or its equivalent.

As per CMO No. 15, series of 2019 guidelines, there are eight (8) types of master's degree programs, namely, (1) Master of Arts Academic Track, (2) Master of Arts by Research, (3) Master of Science Academic Track, (4) Master of Science by Research, (5) Master's Degree Professional Track, (6) Straight Bachelor's-Master's (SBM) Program, (7) Dual Doctor of Medicine-Master's Degree (MDMD) Program, and (8) Dual Master's Degrees (DMD) Program. On the other hand, there are five types of doctoral programs, namely, (1) Doctor of Philosophy Academic Track, (2) Doctor of Philosophy by Research, (3) Doctoral Degree Professional Track, (4) Straight Master's-Doctoral (SMD) Program, (5) Double Doctoral Degrees (DDD) Program.

BU offers seven (7) doctoral programs which follow the academic track wherein the requirement is at least 24 units and 12 units dissertation. As shown in Table 12, has five (5) doctoral programs whose course work requirement is 48 units and 12 units dissertation and two doctoral programs with 30 units course work requirement and 12 units dissertation.

For the master's degree program, BU offers two types/tracks, namely, academic track and non-thesis (professional track). The 38 master's degree programs under the academic track have different credit-unit distribution with course work requirement ranging from 24 to 36 units and thesis credit unit ranging from 6 to 15 units. As stipulated in CMO No. 15, series of 2019, the academic requirement for master's degree programs under the academic track is at least 24 units course work and six (6) units thesis.

BU has one (1) master's degree which is non-thesis or under professional track. The program requires a course work of 30 units without thesis. The CMO, however, prescribes a 3-unit capstone project or its equivalent as part of the requirement.

Table 13. Average number of semesters/terms to earn the degree for SY 2023-2024 graduates

Degree Program	Ave. Number of Semesters for Coursework	Ave. Number of Semesters for Thesis/Dissertation	Ave. Number of Semesters to Earn the Degree
Doctoral Degree	5.38	7.75	9.25
Master's Degree	4.30	6.70	8.36

Based on the data presented, there is a need for BU to review and revise its graduate degree programs to align them with the curriculum structure as prescribed in CMO No. 15, series of 2019. The graduate degree programs of BU require more course work than what the CMO prescribes which is one of the reasons for the extended residence of graduate students. As shown in Table 13, graduates of SY 2023-2023 in doctoral program took an average of 9.25 semesters to earn the degree while master's degree graduates took 8.36 semesters to earn their degrees. Reducing the course work requirement in accordance with CMO No. 15, series of 2019 will help fast track graduate degree completion.

B. Faculty Qualification and Expertise

CMO No. 15, series of 2019 places significant emphasis on the qualifications of the graduate faculty. The CMO requires that for the master's programs on the thesis track there shall be at least four (4) full-time faculty members who have doctoral degrees in the discipline. If there is a dearth in the doctoral degree holders in the discipline, there shall be at least one (1) full-time faculty who has a doctoral degree in the discipline and at least three (3) full-time faculty who are master's degree holders, but with doctoral units in the discipline.

For the non-thesis track master's programs, there shall be at least four (4) full-time faculty who have doctoral degrees in the discipline. If there is a dearth in doctoral degree holders in the discipline, at least one (1) full-time faculty who has a doctoral degree in the discipline and at least three (3) full-time faculty who are master's degree holders but with doctoral units in the discipline or three (3) full-time faculty who are master's degree holders, but with extensive industry experience for industry-oriented programs.

For doctoral programs, CMO No. 15, series of 2019 requires at least four (4) full-time faculty members per doctoral program at all times. They are doctoral degree holders in the discipline.

Table 14. Distribution of graduate faculty according to graduate program assignment and highest educational attainment/field of specialization

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
<u>Doctoral Program</u>			
Ed.D. Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (Residential)	9	Ed.D. in Educational Management	2
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Management	1
		Ph.D. in Development Education	1
		Ed.D. in Guidance and Counselling	1
		Ph.D. in Extension Education	1
		Doctor of Communication	1
		Ph.D. in Social Development	1
		Ph.D. in Community Development	1
Ed.D. Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (Open U)	4	Ed.D. in Educational Management	2
		Ph.D. in Extension Education	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management	1
Ph.D. Educational Foundations	10	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	4
		Ph.D. in Social Development	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Development	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ed.D. in Guidance and Counselling	1
		Ph.D. in Community Development	1
Ph.D. in Public Administration	10	Ph.D. in Public Administration	5
		Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Development	1
		Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics	1
		Ph.D. Educational Foundations	1

Table 14. (continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
Ph.D. in Development Management	7	Ph.D. in Development Management	4
		Ph.D. in Community Development	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Development	1
		Doctor of Information Technology	1
Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration	3	Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Public Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1

Ph.D. in Filipino	4	Ph.D. in Filipino	4
Ph.D. in Mathematics Education	2	Ph.D. in Mathematics Education	2
<u>Master's Program</u>			
M.A. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (Residential)	6	Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Management	2
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	3
M.A. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (Open U)	8	Ed.D. in Educational Management II	2
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Management I	1
		Ph.D. in Extension Education I	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management- I	1
		Master in Public Administration- I	1
		Master in Information System- 1	1
		Doctor in Information Technology- I	1
M.A. in Biology Education	8	Ph.D. in Biology	1
		Ph.D. in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology	1
		Ph.D. in Science Education (with units)	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Management	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
		M.A. in Biology Education	1
		M.A. in Chemistry Education	2
M.A. in Chemistry Education	4	Ph.D. in Agricultural Chemistry	1
		Ph.D. in Science Education	1
		M.A. in Chemistry Education	2
M.A. in Physics Education	4	Ph.D. in Atmospheric Science	1
		Ph.D. in Science Education (with units)	1
		M.A. in Chemistry Education	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
M.A. in General Science Education	4	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	2
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	1
		M.A. in Chemistry Education	1
M.A. in Math Education	4	Ph.D. Mathematics Education	2
		Ph.D. Mathematics Education (with units)	2
M.A. in Cultural Education	5	Ed.D. Educational Management	2
		Doctor in Communication	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
		M.A. in Cultural Education	1
M.A. in English Education (Residential)	5	Ph.D. in Liberal Arts	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	3
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Management	1
M.A. in English Education (Open U)	4	Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	2
		Ph.D. in Liberal Arts	1

Table 14. (continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
M.A. in Filipino Education	3	Ph.D. in Filipino	3
M.A. in Pre-School Education	4	Ed.D. in Guidance and Counselling	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations (with units)	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (with units)	2
M.A. in Guidance and Counselling	4	Ed.D. in Guidance and Counselling	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	2
		Ph.D. in Guidance and Counselling (CAR)	1

M.A. in Music Education	3	Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ph.D. Educational Foundations (with units)	2
M.A. in Reading Education	5	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	3
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt.	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (with units)	1
M.A. in Social Studies Education (Residential)	8	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	2
		Ph.D. in Sociology (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations (CAR)	2
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Extension Education	1
		Doctor of Philosophy (with units)	1
M.A. in Social Studies Education (Open U)	6	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	2
		Ph.D. in Extension Education	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
		Ph.D. in Public Administration	1
		Doctor of Philosophy (with units)	1
Master in Cooperative Management	4	Doctor of Business Administration	2
		Ph.D. Agricultural Economics	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	1
Master in Economics	6	Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics	1
		Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics (CAR)	2
		Ph.D. in Public Administration (with units)- I	1
		Ph.D. in Management (with units)- I	1
		Ph.D. in Public Administration	1
Master in Entrepreneurship	7	Doctor of Business Administration	2
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	1
		Master in Entrepreneurship	2
		Ph.D. in Business Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Human Resource Development	1
Master in Management (Residential)	12	Doctor of Business Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Business Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management	2
		Doctor of Education	1
		Doctor in Business Administration (with units)	2
		Ph.D. in Management (with units)	2
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
Master in Management (Open U)	5	Ph.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
		Ph.D. in Management (with units)	1
		M.A. Nursing (Mirandilla)	1

Table 14. (continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
Master in Management (major in HRM)	7	Ph.D. in Business Administration	1
		Doctor of Business Administration	1
		Doctor of Business Administration (with units)	1
		Ph.D. Development Management (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management	2
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
Master of Public Administration (Residential)	8	Ph.D. in Public Administration	4
		Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1

		Ph.D. in Public Administration (with units)	1
		M.A. in Social Science	1
Master of Public Administration (Open U)	7	Ph.D. in Public Administration	2
		Ph.D. in Extension Education	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (with units)	1
		Doctor of Philosophy (with units)	1
Master in Local Gov't. Mgt. (Residential)	1	M.A. in Social Science	1
Master in Local Gov't. Mgt. (Open U)	4	Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Counsellor Education	1
		Doctor of Philosophy (with units)	1
		Master in Information System	1
Master in Public Admin. (maj. HEDM)	4	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
		Master in Nursing	1
		Ph.D. Public Administration (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (with units)	1
Master in Public Admin. (maj. In Public Proc.)	4	Ph.D. in Public Administration	4
M.A. in Peace and Security Studies	3	Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Public Administration	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
M.A. in Literature	5	Ph.D. in Literature	1
		Ph.D. in English Language and Literature	1
		Ph.D. in Philippine Studies (CAR)	2
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations (with units)	1
M.A. Filipino	2	Ph.D. in Filipino	2
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in TLE)	7	Ed.D. in Industrial Education	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt.	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Development Education (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	2
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in IT)	4	Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
		Ed.D. in Industrial Education	1
		Ph.D. in Development Education	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (with units)	1
M.A. in Nursing	6	Ph.D. in Nursing Education	1
		Ph.D. in Public Administration	2
		Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	1
		Ph.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	1

Table 14. (continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
M.S. in Biology	7	Ph.D. in Biology	1
		Ph.D. in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology	1
		Ph.D. in Forestry (Forest Biological Science)	1
		Ph.D. in Biotechnology	1
		Ph.D. in Biology (CAR)	1
		Master in Biology	1
		M.S. in Biology	1
Master in Information System	8	Doctor in Information Technology	5
		Master in Information Technology	1
		Doctor in Information Technology (with units)	1

		Doctor of Engineering (with units)	1
M.A. in Physical Education	5	Doctor of Science in Physical Education	2
		Ph.D. in Education	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt.	1
		Ed.D. in Educ. Leadership and Mgt. (with units)	1
M.S. in Architecture	3	Ph.D. in Development Management	1
		Ph.D. in Development Management (with units)	1
		Ph.D. in Environmental Mgt. (with units)	1
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Agronomy)	3	Ph.D. in Soil Science	2
		Ph.D. in Plant Science	1
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Crop Science)	6	Ph.D. in Entomology	1
		Ph.D. in Agronomy	1
		M.S. in Agricultural Engineering	1
		Ph.D. in Soil Science	1
		Ph.D. in Plant Science	1
		Ph.D. in Horticulture (with units)	1
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Animal Science)	3	Ph.D. in Animal Science	1
		Ph.D. in Plant Science	1
		Ph.D. in Soil Science	1
M.S. in Agriculture (Agri. Extension)	6	Ph.D. Plant Science	1
		Ph.D. in Development Education	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management (CAR)	1
		M.S. in Agricultural Extension	1
		M.A. in Education	1
M.S. in Biodiversity and Environmental Mgt.	6	Ph.D. in Soil Science	1
		Ph.D. in Forestry	1
		M.S. in Environmental Science	1
		Ph.D. in Forestry (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Environmental Science (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Marine Science (CAR)	1
M.S. in Sustainable Food System	6	Ph.D. in Soil Science	1
		Ph.D. in Plant Science	1
		Ph.D. in Fish Ecology	1
		Ph.D. in Horticulture (with units)	1
		Master in Human Ecology	1
		M.A. in Education	1
Master in Rural Development	5	Ph.D. in Development Education	1
		M.S. in Agricultural Extension	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management	1
		Ed.D. in Educational Management (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Environmental Science (CAR)	1

Table 14. (continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Highest Educational Attainment	
		Degree	Number
M.S. in Fisheries (major in CRM)	5	Ph.D. in Fish Ecology	1
		Ph.D. in Kuroshio Science	1
		Ph.D. in Marine Science (CAR)	1
		Ph.D. in Fisheries (with units)	1
		M.S. in Environmental Science	1
M.S. in Fisheries Technology	6	Ph.D. in Fish Ecology	1
		Ph.D. in Kuroshio Science	1
		Ph.D. in Marine Science (CAR)	2
		Ph.D. in Development Management (CAR)	1
		M.S. in Environmental Science	1

Based on Table 14 and in reference to the provisions of CMO No. 15 series of 2019, several programs meet the required faculty complement in terms of number, qualifications, and vertical alignment. These compliant programs have a sufficient number of faculty members holding doctoral degrees that are aligned with the discipline or field of specialization of the program as mandated by CHED for both master's and doctoral programs.

Once good example is the Ph.D. in Public Administration which has 10 faculty members, five (5) of whom hold Ph.D. in Public Administration. The others have related doctorates such as in Development Management, Counsellor Education, Agricultural Economics, and Educational Foundations. The number and alignment of these faculty members fulfill CHED's requirement for doctoral degrees which is four (4) faculty members with doctoral degrees in the discipline.

Similarly, the Ph.D. in Educational Foundations program is compliant, with 10 faculty members, four (4) of whom hold a Ph.D. in Educational Foundations and others holding doctorates in closely allied fields, such as Social Development, Educational Leadership and Management, and Guidance and Counselling. This reflects adequate faculty strength and vertical alignment with the program.

The Ph.D. in Development Management program also appears compliant, with seven (7) faculty members, four of whom hold Ph.D. in Development Management degree. The remaining faculty hold related degrees in Community Development, Educational Leadership and Management, and Information Technology, all of which can be considered aligned depending on program content and focus.

On the other hand, the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management, both for the residential and distance education modalities, is compliant with the CMO. With a total of 13 faculty members, many of whom hold doctoral degrees specifically in Educational Leadership and Management or in closely related disciplines such as Educational Management and Development Education, the program meets and exceeds the minimum number of qualified faculty.

The Ph.D. in Filipino is also compliant. It has exactly four (4) full-time faculty members, all of whom holds doctoral degrees in Filipino. This makes it fully aligned with the CMO's stipulation that doctoral programs must be staffed with at least four (4) full-time faculty holding doctoral degrees in the discipline. The alignment between faculty qualifications and the academic program further affirms the program's compliance.

The Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration is non-compliant with the faculty qualification requirements. It has only three (3) faculty members, one (1) of whom holds a Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration, while the others have doctoral degrees in allied fields such as Public Administration and Educational Foundations. Moreover, the total number of full-time doctoral faculty falls short of the minimum required number which is four (4).

Similarly, the Ph.D. in Mathematics Education is also non-compliant. Although the two (2) faculty members assigned to the program hold doctoral degrees directly aligned with the discipline, the program lacks the minimum number of four (4) full-time faculty with doctoral degrees in the discipline as mandated by the CMO for graduate programs at the doctoral level. One way to address the gap is by assigning the two (2) faculty members holding Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, who are handling the M.A. in Mathematics Education, to the Ph.D. in Mathematics Education program.

Table 15 provides the summary of the evaluation of compliance of 46 master's degree programs (residential and distance modes) with the faculty qualification requirements prescribed in CMO No. 15, series of 2019. The CMO requires that each graduate program must have either four (4) full-time faculty members with doctoral degrees in the discipline or, in the absence of such, at least one (1) full-time faculty member with a doctoral degree in the discipline and three (3) others with master's degree and doctoral units in the same field.

Based on this standard, programs were categorized as compliant, partially compliant, or non-compliant. A program is considered compliant if it meets both the minimum number of faculty and the required qualifications in the discipline. It is partially compliant if it either lacks the full complement of faculty or does not have sufficient doctoral qualifications aligned with the discipline. A non-compliant program fails to meet both the faculty number and qualification requirements.

Out of the 46 master's programs assessed in both the residential and distance learning modes, 22 were found to be compliant, 10 were partially compliant, and 14 were non-compliant. The compliant programs such as the M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management, M.A. in Mathematics Education, Master of Public Administration (residential), M.S. in Biology, and Master in Information System, demonstrate strong institutional capacity, with faculty members whose qualifications are well-aligned with the programs they are teaching. These programs reflect effective faculty development strategies and a commitment to maintaining academic quality, suggesting further that sustained investment in doctoral education and careful program staffing lead to better compliance with national standards.

On the other hand, partially compliant programs, such as the M.A. in Chemistry Education, M.A. in Pre-School Education, and Master in Public Administration (distance learning mode), either have enough faculty but lack sufficient doctoral qualifications in the discipline, or have qualified individuals but fewer than the required four (4) full-time faculty members. These programs show potential for compliance but require targeted interventions such as sending faculty to doctoral studies in the discipline, providing incentives for professional development, or hiring new qualified staff.

The 14 non-compliant programs, which include M.A. in Physics Education, M.A. in English Education, M.A. in Social Studies Education, and M.S. in Architecture, suffer from a more serious deficiency, either in the number of faculty, or the alignment of qualifications, or both. The presence of non-compliant programs raises concerns about the sustainability and academic credibility of these academic offerings. The university may need to consider program consolidation, faculty retooling, or partnerships with other higher education institutions to address the lack of qualified faculty.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that fewer than half of the graduate programs fully comply with CHED's faculty qualification requirements. This underscores the need for strategic institutional planning and faculty development. The university must focus on recruiting, retaining, and developing faculty with doctoral qualifications in relevant disciplines, as well as aligning program offerings with the availability of qualified human resources. Ensuring compliance not only strengthens academic quality but also enhances institutional reputation and accreditation prospects.

Table 15. Compliance of master's degree programs quality qualification requirements based on CMO No. 15, series of 2019

Program	Evaluation of Compliance	Reason/Remark
M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management (Residential)	Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement; with 2 doctoral degree holders in Educational Leadership and Management, 1 in Educational Management, and the rest in related fields
M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management (Open U)	Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement; with 2 doctoral degree holders in Educational Leadership and Management, 1 in Educational Management, and 1 in Extension Education,
M.A. in Biology Education	Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement with 8, 1 of whom has a doctorate in Biology and 1 in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, 1 with doctoral units in Science Education, and 1 with a master's in Biology.
M.A. in Chemistry Education	Partially Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement with 4 and has 1 with doctoral degree in Agricultural Chemistry
M.A. in Physics Education	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or faculty with doctoral units in the discipline
M.A. in General Science Education	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or faculty with doctoral units in the discipline
M.A. in Mathematics Education	Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement with 4, 2 of whom are doctoral degree holders in the discipline while the remaining 2 has doctoral units
M.A. in Cultural Education	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or sufficient faculty with doctoral units in the discipline
M.A. in English Education (Residential and Open U)	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or sufficient faculty with doctoral units
M.A. in Filipino Education	Partially Compliant	While it has 3 doctoral degree holders in Filipino, it does not meet minimum faculty requirement with only 3
M.A. in Pre-School Education	Partially Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement with 4; has one doctoral degree holder in Guidance and Counselling but the rest have no doctoral units in the discipline
M.A. in Guidance and Counselling	Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement with 4, 1 is a doctoral degree in the Guidance and Counselling while another 1 has doctoral units in the discipline; the remaining 2 are master's degree holder in the discipline

Table 15. (continuation . . .)

Program	Evaluation of Compliance	Reason/Remark
M.A. in Music Education	Non-Compliant	Does not meet minimum faculty requirement with only 3 and lacks required doctoral-level faculty in the discipline
M.A. in Reading Education	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or master's degree holder in the discipline
M.A. in Social Studies Education (Residential and Open U)	Non-Compliant	No doctoral degree holder or sufficient faculty with doctoral units in the discipline
Master in Cooperative Management	Non-Compliant	No qualified doctoral faculty in cooperative management
Master in Economics	Compliant	Has 1 doctoral degree holder in Agricultural Economics and 2 with completed course works; the rest of the have a master's degree in economics
Master in Entrepreneurship	Compliant	Meets the requirement with 3 doctoral degree holders in Business Administration and 2 with a master's degree in Entrepreneurship
Master in Management (Residential)	Compliant	Meets requirement with 2 doctoral degree holders in Business Administration, and 3 with doctoral units in Management
Master in Management (Open U)	Non-Compliant	Lacks doctoral-level faculty
Master in Management (major in HRM)	Compliant	Meets requirement with 2 doctoral degree holders in Business Administration, 1 with doctoral units in Business Administration, and the rest have a master's degree in Management
Master of Public Administration (Residential)	Compliant	Has 4 doctoral degree holders in Public Administration and 1 with doctoral units in Public Administration
Master of Public Administration (Open U)	Partially Compliant	Has 2 doctoral degree holders in Public Administration, 1 with doctoral units in Public Administration, while others have degrees related to Public Administration
Master in Local Government Management (Residential and Open U)	Non-Compliant	Lacks required faculty qualifications
Master in Public Administration (major in Health Emergency and Disaster Management)	Non-Compliant	No qualified faculty with doctoral degree in the discipline
Master in Public Administration (major in Public Procurement)	Compliant	Has 4 doctoral degree holders in Public Administration
M.A. in Peace and Security Studies	Partially Compliant	Has one doctoral degree holder in the discipline but lacks the minimum number of faculty of 4

Table 15. (continuation . . .)

Program	Evaluation of Compliance	Reason/Remark
M.A. in Literature	Compliant	Meets the requirement with 1 doctoral degree holder in Literature and another 1 in English Language and Literature, while 2 have a master's in Literature
M.A. Filipino	Non-Compliant	Lacks doctoral degree holder in the discipline; does not meet the minimum requirement of 4
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in TLE)	Compliant	Meets minimum requirement of faculty,

		with 1 doctoral degree holder in Industrial Education, while the rest have master's degree in Industrial Education
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in IT)	Compliant	Meets minimum requirement of faculty, with 1 doctoral degree holder in Industrial Education, while the rest have master's degree in Industrial Education
M.A. In Nursing	Partially Compliant	Meets the minimum faculty requirement; with 1 doctoral degree holder in Nursing Education
M.S. in Biology	Compliant	Fully meets the requirement
Master in Information System	Compliant	Fully meets the requirement
M.A. in Physical Education	Compliant	Meets minimum requirement of faculty, with 2 doctoral degree holders in Physical Education while the rest have master's degrees in related field
M.S. In Architecture	Non-compliant	Lacks doctoral degree holder in the discipline and minimum requirement of faculty
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Agronomy)	Partially Compliant	Has 3 doctoral degree holders in Plant Science and Soil Science but does not meet minimum faculty requirement
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Crop Science)	Partially Compliant	Has 1 doctoral degree holder in Animal but does not meet minimum faculty requirement
M.S. in Agriculture (Agri. Extension)	Partially Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement of 4, with 1 doctoral degree holder in Development Education, and 1 with MS in Agricultural Extension
M.S. in Biodiversity and Environmental Mgt.	Compliant	Meets full requirement
M.S. in Sustainable Food System	Compliant	Meets full requirement
Master in Rural Development	Partially Compliant	Meets minimum faculty requirement of 4 but lacks a doctoral degree holder in the discipline
M.S. in Fisheries (major in CRM)	Compliant	Meets full requirement
M.S. in Fisheries Technology	Compliant	Meets full requirement

C. Research Engagement of Graduate Faculty

Table 16. Distribution of researches implemented in 2023 by graduate degree program

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Number of Researches	Status	
			On-going	Completed
<i>Doctoral</i>				
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Mgt. (Residential)	9	5	5	-
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Mgt. (Distance)	4	No Data	No Data	No Data
Ph.D. in Educational Foundations	10	3	3	-
Ph.D. in Public Administration	10	2	-	2
Ph.D. in Development Management	7	3	2	1
Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration	3	-	-	-
Ph.D. in Filipino	4	1	1	-
Ph.D. in Mathematics Education	2	-	-	-
<i>Master's</i>				
M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management (Residential)	6	1	1	0
M.A. in Educational Leadership and Management (Distance)	8	No Data	No Data	No Data

M.A. in Biology Education	8	5	5	-
M.A. in Chemistry Education	4	3	2	1
M.A. in Physics Education	4	1	1	-
M.A. in General Science Education	4	3	3	-
M.A. in Mathematics Education	4	3	3	-
M.A. in Cultural Education	5	1	-	1
M.A. in English Education (Residential)	5	4	2	2
M.A. in English Education (Distance)	4	No Data	No Data	No Data
M.A. in Filipino Education	3	1	-	1
M.A. in Pre-School Education	4	2	2	-
M.A. in Guidance and Counselling	4	1	-	1
M.A. in Music Education	3	3	2	1
M.A. in Reading Education	5	1	1	-
M.A. in Social Studies Education (Residential)	8	1	1	-
M.A. in Social Studies Education (Distance)	6	No Data	No Data	No Data
Master in Cooperative Management	4	-	-	-
Master in Economics	6	1	-	1
Master in Entrepreneurship	7	4	1	3
Master in Management (Residential)	12	-	-	-
Master in Management (Distance)	5	No Data	No Data	No Data
Master in Management (major in HRM)	7	1	1	-
Master of Public Administration (Residential)	8	2	1	1
Master of Public Administration (Distance)	7	No Data	No Data	No Data
Master in Local Government Management (Residential)	1	1	-	1
Master in Local Government Management (Distance)	4	No Data	No Data	No Data
Master in Public Administration (major HEDM)	4	1	1	-
Master in Public Administration (major in Public Procurement)	4	1	1	-
M.A. in Peace and Security Studies	3	1	1	-
M.A. in Literature	5	4	4	-
M.A. Filipino	2	1	1	-
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in TLE)	7	No Data	No Data	No Data
M.A. in Industrial Education (major in IT)	4	4	3	1
M.A. in Nursing	6	4	4	-
M.S. in Biology	7	4	4	-

Table 16. (Continuation . . .)

Graduate Program	Number of Faculty Members	Number of Researches	Status	
			On-going	On-going
Master in Information System	8	4	3	1
M.A. in Physical Education	5	-	-	-
M.S. in Architecture	3	-	-	-
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Agronomy)	3	No Data	No Data	No Data
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Crop Science)	6	2	2	-
M.S. in Agriculture (major in Animal Science)	3	2	1	1
M.S. in Agriculture (Agri. Extension)	6	2	2	0
M.S. in Biodiversity and Environmental Management	6	5	-	5
M.S. in Sustainable Food System	6	5	4	1
Master in Rural Development	5	2	2	-
M.S. in Fisheries (major in CRM)	5	5	3	2
M.S. in Fisheries Technology	6	1	1	-

Research engagement is a requirement for graduate faculty as it ensures the delivery of advanced, research-based instruction that is expected at the graduate level. Graduate education is inherently rooted in the creation, dissemination, and application of new knowledge and faculty members who are actively engaged in research are better equipped to mentor students in developing critical thinking, scholarly rigor, and methodological competence. Moreover, research-active faculty contribute to the relevance and quality of graduate programs by integrating current findings into their teaching, guiding student theses and

dissertations effectively, and ensuring that the institution maintains its academic credibility. Thus, research engagement is not only a compliance measure but a cornerstone of quality assurance in graduate education.

With the foregoing considerations, the study tried to ascertain the distribution of researches implemented in 2023 by graduate degree program, highlighting the number of faculty members involved, and the status of their research. Among the doctoral programs, the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management (residential) program showed the highest engagement, with five (5) on-going researches among nine (9) faculty members, although none were completed. The Ph.D. in Educational Foundations and the Ph.D. in Development Management also demonstrated research activity, with on-going and completed researches. It is also notable to mention that the Ph.D. in Public Administration had two (2) completed studies, indicating a productive output relative to its faculty size. In contrast, two doctoral programs, namely, the Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration and the Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, had not recorded research activity.

At the master's level, research engagement was more varied but generally higher. Programs such as the M.A. in Biology Education, M.A. in Chemistry Education, M.A. in General Science Education, M.A. in Mathematics Education, and M.A. in English Education (residential) each recorded multiple research activities, with a balanced mix of on-going and completed studies. Some programs, like the M.S. in Biodiversity and Environmental Management and M.S. in Sustainable Food System, had a notable number of completed researches. However, certain programs – including Master in Cooperative Management, Master in Management (residential), and M.A. in Physical Education – did not report any research activity, pointing gaps that need to be addressed in future academic planning.

It can be observed also that in some programs, the number of researches is proportionate – or even high – relative to faculty size, indicating strong research engagement. For example, the M.A. in Biology Education has eight (8) faculty members and five (5) completed researches, showing a high level of productivity and possibly a collaborative research culture. Similarly, the M.S. in Biodiversity Environmental Management, with six (6) faculty members and five (5) completed researches, demonstrates efficient use of resources and a mature research environment. These cases suggest that with the right support and motivation, small- to mid-size faculty groups can yield significant research outputs.

Conversely, there are programs with a relatively large number of faculty members but with minimal or no research outputs. The Master in Management (residential), for instance, has 12 faculty members but no reported research activity in 2023. The same is true for the Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration and Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, where faculty presence did not translate to research engagement. These gaps may indicate issues such as heavy teaching load, insufficient administrative support, lack of alignment between faculty expertise and research priorities, or inadequate research expertise.

The disparity in research engagements across programs suggests a need for differentiated strategies. Programs with low research output despite adequate faculty resources may require targeted intervention such as mentoring, capacity building workshops, and institutional support for proposal development and funding. On the other hand, high-performing programs can serve as models and mentors, sharing best practices and helping build a stronger research culture across the institution.

Overall, the findings reflect a generally positive trend in research implementation among graduate programs, especially at the master's level. However, the absence of research in some programs and the lack of completed outputs in others indicate the need for strengthened research support systems, more deliberate mentoring, and perhaps policy reinforcement to ensure a more consistent culture or research productivity across all programs.

Challenges Faced in Implementing the Reforms Mandated by CMO No. 15, series of 2019

The implementation of reforms mandated by CMO No. 15, series of 2019 presents a significant shift on the delivery and management of graduate education in the Philippines. The CMO aims to enhance the quality and relevance of graduate programs through stricter faculty qualifications, higher research productivity, and outcome-based education. Many HEIs, however, are facing considerable hurdles in meeting the requirements. As HEIs, strive to comply with these standards, they encounter both structural and operational constraints that hinder the full realization of the policy reforms.

With this in mind, the study tried to ascertain the challenges posed by CMO No. 15, series of 2019 by interviewing 10 key informants, comprised of four (4) graduate students, three (3) graduate faculty, and three (3) DAU officials involved in implementing the graduate programs. The following challenges were identified by the key informants along the following areas:

1. Meeting the faculty qualification requirement

Meeting the faculty qualification requirement under CMO No. 15 series of 2019 presents a significant challenge for BU according to the key informants. That CMO requires that for master's program to be recognized, an institution must have at least four (4) full-time faculty members with doctoral degree in the discipline, or, in the absence of four (4), at least one (1) full-time doctoral degree holder and three (3) full-time faculty members with master's degrees and doctoral units in the discipline.

While BU has made significant strides in faculty development, there remain programs – especially newly introduced or highly specialized fields (e.g., M.S. Architecture, M.A. in Physics Education) – where doctoral degree holders are few. This greatly affects the university's ability to secure or maintain compliance during CHED evaluation. Further exacerbating the lack of faculty members with doctoral degrees in the discipline is the retirement of faculty members. Case in point is BU Guinobatan and BU Tabaco which lost several faculty members during the last five (5) years due to retirement. Although BU has massively invested in capacity building during the last eight (8) years, the return on these investments takes years. Furthermore, it also takes years before

they develop the competencies lost due to retirement.

It can also be noted that several of BU's graduate programs (e.g., public administration, development management, biodiversity and environmental management, sustainable food system, peace studies) are interdisciplinary in nature. Strict compliance with the "in the discipline" requirement of CMO No. 15 series of 2019 can be problematic, as faculty credentials may span multiple fields rather than one clearly defined discipline.

Meeting the faculty requirement based on the CMO is also difficult since access to local doctoral training programs in the region is still limited. This creates a dependency on HEIs outside the Bicol region or abroad, further complicating the development of an adequate faculty pool that is consistent with the requirements of CMO N. 15 series of 2019.

2. Accreditation and certification of graduate programs

The CMO sets the policy standards for quality assurance in graduate education and part of compliance by subjecting graduate programs to external quality assurance mechanism through accreditation (e.g., AACCUP) and CHED certification (e.g., COPC). Several challenges were identified along this area such as stringent accreditation standards, resource-intensive accreditation process, faculty qualification as a pre-requisite, need for research-based program certification, and university-wide coordination and compliance.

Accrediting bodies like AACCUP require evidence of outcomes-based education, research productivity, internationalization efforts, and community engagement – areas where some, if not majority, of graduate programs in BU are still in the developmental stage. Meeting these standards requires intensive documentation, preparation, and sustained improvement. This is, however, difficult to achieve considering that BU faculty members are expected to perform instruction, research, and extension functions leaving them with a very limited time, or none at all, to gather documentary evidences. It must also be understood that graduate faculty members are not only teaching in the Graduate School but they have their regular teaching load in their mother units.

Preparing for and subjecting the graduate programs for accreditation is resource-intensive as it entails administrative work, faculty training, curriculum revisions, infrastructure improvement, and data collection. BU, like many public universities, has to meet these requirements within limited budget and administrative manpower, which does not only delay accreditation timelines but also sacrifices other priorities.

A key requirement in accreditation and CHED certification process is compliance with faculty qualifications. The lack of or inadequate doctoral degree holders in certain disciplines tend to hinder BU's ability to move forward in the accreditation and CHED certification process.

The accreditation and CHED certification need research-based program certification as graduate programs are expected to demonstrate a strong research orientation. While BU encourages faculty members to be actively involved in research, heavy teaching load (due partly to inadequate faculty), uneven research capacity across programs and publication requirement in refereed or indexed journals make it difficult for some programs to meet the bar set for certification or Level III or IV accreditation.

As a comprehensive university with multiple campuses and colleges, BU faces the added challenge of ensuring uniform compliance across its system. Coordinating program review, self-survey preparation, mock accreditation, and actual accreditation visits across units require good coordination and communication.

3. Publication in refereed journal as requirement for graduation

One of the key requirements under CMO No. 15, series of 2019 is that graduate students must have at least one publication in a refereed journal (or its equivalent) before they can be conferred their degree. While this aims to elevate the quality and global competitiveness of graduate education, the key informant identified significant challenges for both graduate students and BU on the following grounds that include limited access to quality journals, varying levels of research competence of graduate students, lengthy review and publication timelines, and unequal research opportunities across disciplines.

Many graduate students at BU struggle to find accessible, credible, and CHED-recognized refereed journals, especially those that are open access and do not charge high publication fees. While BU has its CHED-recognized journal (i.e., the BU R&D Journal), it cannot accommodate a substantial number of graduate students who wish to publish their theses and dissertation due to the additional administrative work and expenses that they will entail. It is not also clear among student's which part of their research will be published as there is no clear guidelines yet on this matter.

As per observation, not all graduate students who are admitted into the program do not have strong foundations in research and academic writing. For these students, producing a publishable paper that meets the rigorous standards or peer-reviewed journals can be an overwhelming task. The process often requires extensive revisions, guidance, and time – factors that can significantly delay the completion of their degree. The publication, thus, becomes a major hurdle rather than an opportunity for scholarly growth.

The peer review process in reputable journals can be lengthy and unpredictable, often taking several months to over a year from submission to publication. This extended timeline is due to several factors like the initial editorial screening, time needed for multiple rounds of expert peer review, revisions by the author, and final editorial decisions. This delay can be highly consequential especially those nearing the end of their programs. It can prevent them from meeting the graduation requirement on time as mandated by CMO No. 15 series of 2019, which requires publication before awarding the degree. As a result, students

may be forced to postpone their graduation, extend their residency, and bear additional financial burdens. The delay may disrupt their career plans, especially for those who are lined up for promotion.

The key informants also noted the unequal research opportunities across disciplines. Some graduate programs have limited access to established publication platforms compared to others, making it difficult for their students to fulfill the publication requirement. For instance, natural and physical sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science), social sciences (e.g., sociology, psychology, economics), and education have more publication platforms compared to public administration and governance, business and management, and agriculture and fisheries. This disparity creates unequal difficulty across BU's graduate programs, despite the uniform requirement.

4. Curriculum review, revision and development

Curriculum review, revision, and development is a critical yet challenging task for BU in ensuring compliance with CMO No. 15 series of 2019. The CMO mandates that graduate curricula must be outcome-based, research driven, globally aligned, and responsive to national development goals. While BU is committed to academic excellence, there are several factors that make curriculum enhancement a challenging undertaking like alignment with evolving standards and outcomes-based education (OBE), integration of research and publication requirements, limited faculty with curriculum development experience, and need for vertical articulation and internationalization.

CMO No. 15 series of 2019 emphasizes the use of OBE framework which requires that program outcomes, course learning outcomes, and assessment tools are clearly articulated and aligned. The key informants representing graduate faculty raised the concern that shifting older curricula to the OBE framework demands a comprehensive overhaul of course syllabi, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods that will require intensive faculty training.

The CMO mandates stronger research orientation and inclusion of requirements such as publication prior to graduation. Embedding these into the curriculum without overloading the students or disrupting the program structure requires careful sequencing of courses, research mentoring system, and capacity-building among faculty. It must be noted that graduate students of BU have varying research competencies. The publication requirement also demands for faculty research mentoring, but faculty members are already burdened with heavy teaching loads and administrative responsibilities. Furthermore, the publication requirement may also prolong the time-to-degree completion as it takes months or even year from submission to publication.

Limited faculty with curriculum development experience is a significant challenge for BU in implementing the provisions of CMO No. 15 series of 2019. The CMO emphasizes OBE, research integration, program differentiation, vertical articulation, and global relevance which require a high level of curriculum planning expertise. Except for those from the College of Education, BU has a dearth of faculty members adequately equipped to meet these demands. Faculty members without formal training in OBE may find it difficult to design courses that will fulfill these requirements. The key informants further shared their apprehension about faculty members who are unfamiliar with curriculum mapping, benchmarking, and academic program development may find it difficult to create vertically articulated and internationally comparable curricula.

The need for vertical articulation and internationalization also presents a significant challenge for BU in implementing the provisions of CMO No. 15 series of 2019. These two requirements – ensuring coherence across academic levels and aligning programs with global standards – are essential to elevating the relevance and competitiveness of graduate programs. Vertical articulation requires that graduate programs be logically and academically linked with undergraduate offerings in terms of content, skills development, and research orientation. Ensuring vertical articulation of academic programs is a big challenge for BU because it will require a comprehensive curriculum audit across all programs. Moreover, in order to achieve vertical articulation, BU must ensure that graduate programs build upon the competencies developed at the undergraduate level.

5. Maintaining international standards

The key informants believed that maintaining international standards poses a serious challenge for BU in implementing CMO N. 15 series of 2019 due to a number of factors such as limited exposure to global academic benchmarks, variability in faculty expertise and international engagement, infrastructure and resource limitations, and quality assurance and accreditation requirements.

To maintain international standards, programs must be benchmarked against those of leading universities globally. Without adequate international linkages or visibility, BU will face difficulty in aligning its graduate programs with evolving global standards in content, delivery, and assessment. Adopting international standards will also entail huge financial support from the university.

International standards also require faculty who are not only academically qualified but also globally engaged through research, collaborations, and continuing education. While many BU faculty members are highly competent, not all have extensive exposure to international conferences, research partnerships, or global academic networks. This affects their ability to fully integrate global perspectives into course content.

In adhering to international standards in graduate education, the key informants claimed that BU will face a huge challenge due to infrastructure and resource limitations. BU needs advanced laboratories, digital libraries, updated software, reliable learning management systems, to name only a few. These resources support quality teaching, research, and innovation. However, resource constraints in some DAUs of the Graduate School prevent graduate students from accessing such tools, especially for disciplines

requiring specialized facilities.

International standards also demand rigorous internal and external quality assurance processes such as accreditation, curriculum audits, and certification. However, the volume of documentation, monitoring, and continuous improvement efforts needed to maintain compliance with international frameworks (e.g., ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework, Washington Accord) can strain BU's institutional capacities in terms of budget and manpower requirements.

4. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to assess the compliance of BU's graduate education programs with the mandates of CHED's new graduation education framework, particularly the provisions stipulated in CMO No. 15 series of 2019 on curriculum alignments, faculty qualifications, and graduate faculty research engagement.

The findings reveal that while BU's graduate programs generally conform to the typologies and academic tracks prescribed under CMO No. 15 series of 2019, there is a significant misalignment in terms of the prescribed curriculum structure, particularly in the number of credit units required for course work. The doctoral and master's programs offered by BU tend to exceed the minimum course work and thesis or capstone requirements stipulated in the CMO, leading to extended periods of study and delayed program completion among graduate students. This deviation suggests an urgent need to rationalize the curricular offerings in accordance with the policy's intent of fostering efficiency, flexibility, and academic rigor aligned with national standards. Aligning BU's graduate programs with the provisions of CMO No. 15 series of 2019 will not only enhance program compliance but also contribute to more timely graduation, improved student satisfaction, and more effective use of institutional resources. A comprehensive review and revision of all graduate curricula is, therefore, imperative to ensure their relevance, responsiveness, and compliance with regulatory standards.

In terms of faculty qualification and expertise, several programs have demonstrated compliance by maintaining a sufficient number of full-time faculty with doctoral degrees in the discipline. A significant number of programs remain either partially compliant or non-compliant. Specifically, out of 46 master's programs reviewed both for residential and distance mode, only 22 met the full faculty qualification requirements, while 10 were partially compliant, and 14 were non-compliant. Similarly, although most doctoral programs are compliant, two, like the Ph.D. in Peace and Security Administration and Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, fall short in faculty number and/or discipline-specific qualifications. These findings highlight the urgent need for strategic faculty development initiatives such as targeted recruitment of qualified faculty, and reassignment of faculty to backstop and align with program requirements. Moving forward, BU must adopt a proactive and data-informed approach in faculty deployment and capacity building to ensure that all programs are staffed with qualified experts who are capable of delivering high-quality graduate education.

Finally, the findings affirm that many of BU's graduate programs – particularly at the master's level – demonstrate encouraging levels of faculty research engagement. However, there remains a clear need for institutional strengthening to ensure consistent compliance with the expectations of CMO No. 15 series of 2019. Although several programs have shown a commendable output of completed and on-going research relative to their faculty size, others, including some doctoral programs reported minimal to no research activity. This uneven research engagement suggests systemic and program-specific challenges such as teaching overload, limited institutional incentives, or gaps in faculty research capacity. These must be addressed through strategic interventions, such as capacity building initiatives, structured research mentoring, workload adjustments, and increased access to funding and administrative support. To meet the full intent of the CMO, BU must institutionalize research engagement as a core performance metric for graduate faculty. Strengthening this dimension will not only enhance graduate instruction and student research output but also solidify BU's standing as a research-oriented institution committed to academic excellence and national development.

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