



# TIER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

For Philippine Higher Education Institutions

A System for categorizing HEI for the purposes  
of prioritizing programs accreditation and  
continuous quality improvement, sustainability  
of implementation, and, the development of  
both HEIs and programs towards global  
comparability and international recognition.

TCS Version 3

# TIER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFERING ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

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# PHILIPPINE TECHNOLOGICAL COUNCIL TIER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFERING ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

## Introduction

"The Philippine higher education is mandated to contribute to building a quality nation capable of transcending the social, political, economic, cultural, and ethical issues that constrain the country's human development, productivity, and global competitiveness" as reiterated and re-emphasized last in Sec. 1, CMO 46 S. 2012<sup>1</sup>(Commission on Higher Education's Memorandum Order entitled, "Policy-Standard to Enhance Quality Assurance in Philippine Higher Education Through Outcomes-Based and Typology based QA). As enshrined in the Philippine Constitution of 1987, the state shall "establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and the society" (Phil. Constitution, Art. XIV Sec. 2). It "shall protect, foster and promote the right of all citizens to affordable quality education at all levels (See Sec 2, RA 7722 or Higher Education Act of 1994) and, in so doing, mandates the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the governing body responsible for the development and implementation of state policies which "shall set minimum standards for programs and institutions of higher learning".

The above mandates invariably translate to multiple missions for the Philippine higher educational system as revisited in Sec.2 of the above CMO 46 S. 2012:

- "To produce thoughtful graduates imbued with 1) values reflective of a humanist orientation (e.g., fundamental respect for others as human beings with intrinsic rights, cultural rootedness and avocation to serve); 2) analytical and problem solving skills; 3) the ability to think through the ethical and social implications of a given course of action; and 4) the competency to learn continuously throughout life – that will enable them to live meaningfully in a complex, rapidly changing and globalized world while engaging their community and the nation's development issues and concerns;
- To produce graduates with high levels of academic, thinking, behavioral, and technical skills/competencies that are aligned with national academic and industry standards and needs, and international standards, when applicable;
- To provide focused support to the research required for technological innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness, on the one hand, and
- To help improve the quality of human life of Filipinos, respond effectively to changing societal needs and conditions; and provide solutions to problems at the local community, regional and national levels."

Sec. 3 CMO 46 S. 2012 stipulates further that the fulfillment of the above missions “entails a critical mass of diverse higher educational institutions (HEIs) offering quality programs that meet national standards, and international standards for disciplines/professions (e.g., engineering; information technology and computing; maritime education; accounting; nursing) with such widely accepted standard.” Moreover, for state institutions of higher learning, the Higher Education Act of 1994 that established the CHED further stipulates that these “shall gear their programs to national, regional or local development plans.”

Taking into considerations the above national policies and strategies and in pursuit of its own missions, PTC established, maintains and implements this Tier Classification System which, complementary with its PTC Certification and Accreditation System for Engineering Education, is developed to:

1. Foster the development of a critical mass of diverse and quality higher educational institutions (HEIs) from among state institutions and private HEIs offering engineering and technology programs through PTC's external quality assurance and accreditation works;
2. Foster and prioritize the development of quality programs by these HEIs that meet national and, as well as, international standards of engineering and technology leading to international recognition of both accredited programs and graduate qualifications;
3. Ensure that HEIs, whose accredited programs are internationally recognized for substantial equivalency, has the capacity to sustain and maintain the level of quality to the standards of the international recognition body over time; and
4. Provide guidance to all HEIs intending to submit their engineering and technology programs for accreditation under PTC CASEE.

**ENGR. FEDERICO A. MONSADA**  
PTC President

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ACBET Chair

## Principles and Policies

The Tier Classification System (TCS) for Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is established and implemented to ensure that accredited engineering programs for recognition under the Washington Accord are delivered by higher educational institutions (or HEIs) with continuing and robust capability and institutional autonomy balanced with public accountability to deliver consistently the accredited engineering programs to the Accord standards over time. PTC believes that such an HEI must have the following characteristics:

1. Its mandate and its vision, mission and strategic goals (VMGs) are maintained and continually aligned with national and/or regional development plans as one of its overarching priorities;
2. It has the necessary and appropriate leadership, the organization and the capacity in terms of governance and management, infrastructures, systems and resources to actively pursue the VMGs and its mandate.
3. Its quality leadership and commitment to quality education and quality assurance, in general, and to engineering and technology education, in particular, is considered at the forefront of practice in engineering and technology education.

The development and implementation of the TCS is guided by the following principles and policies:

1. Submission of a program for accreditation is voluntary.
2. Submission of an HEI to the TCS is only for the intended purpose of prioritizing those accredited engineering programs being offered by Tier I HEIs for international recognition.
3. An institution submitting its engineering programs for accreditation under PTC CASEE shall be assessed and evaluated under the TCS prior to proceeding with the program accreditation process.
4. An HEI, irrespective of tier classification, may choose to proceed with accreditation review of its engineering programs for purposes of continuous quality improvement.
5. Only the accredited engineering programs of an institution which has been classified as Tier I institution, however, will be submitted for recognition under the Washington Accord.
6. There are two categories of HEIs under the TCS, namely:
  - **Tier I** – An institution which meets the criteria stipulated herein may be classified as a Tier I institution. Accredited programs of an institution categorized as Tier I will be eligible for recognition under the Washington Accord.
  - **Tier II** – An institution which currently has some identified areas for improvement in any of the three criteria stipulated in the TCS. For purposes of further continuous improvement while the HEI prepares to meet

Tier I criteria, engineering programs of a HEI categorized as Tier II institution maybe reviewed upon the request of the HEI towards national accreditation, i.e., without Washington Accord recognition.

7. The HEI shall undertake a self-assessment and prepare the Self-Tiering Assessment Report (STAR), which shall be submitted to PTC together with the request for evaluation (RFE). The STAR and the guidelines for its preparation are provided in Parts B & C of this document.

## Part A. Tier Classification Criteria

There are three criteria against which the HEI and its performance will be assessed and evaluated as detailed hereunder:

### **Tier Criterion 1 - National and/or Regional Significance of Institution, its Engineering Unit and Engineering Programs**

The higher education institution (HEI) has an established mandate either by force of law or by the Act of Congress of the Republic or by the HEI's corporate constitution or board act and/or by evaluation and approval from the statutory or regulatory body with authority over tertiary education such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) or its predecessor/s, to offer tertiary education within the larger national and regional settings.

The said mandate invariably encompasses the offering of engineering and technology programs, development and enhancing the contribution of engineering and technology to national and/or regional development as one of the institution's overarching priorities.

Consistent with the said mandate, the HEI has formulated, pursued and periodically reviewed its vision, mission and strategic frameworks to ensure that these are continually responsive to changes in national development needs, strategies and priorities while striking a balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability. Its works, and thinking evidently span not only the national boundaries but beyond, in the process increasingly engaging with relevant partners and society having real impacts of magnitude.

In so doing, the HEI and its engineering educational unit (EEU) have continually gained prominence and have become valued partners to the industry, the government, the community, the professional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other HEIs in the country and internationally. Through benchmarking, forging of national and international partnerships and linkages, and, of extension services to the communities around it, the HEI and its EEU have transformed itself into models of global competitiveness and a key player in engineering and technology education in the country that other institutions have emulated and against whom these institutions benchmarked themselves.

In assessing and evaluating the HEI under this criterion, the following elements shall be considered as detailed hereunder:

**TC1.1. Basic Mandate and Purposes** - The HEI and its engineering education unit (EEU) operates under a legal mandate and with established vision, mission and dynamic strategic framework that serve the interests of its stakeholders, on one hand, and, invariably encompass the development, internationalization, and enhancing the contribution of engineering and technology towards national and or regional

development as one of the institution's overarching priorities, on the other.

- a) The vision, mission and strategic goals (VMGs) reflect the HEI's commitment to its stakeholders and to the development and enhancement of the contribution of engineering and technology to national and/or regional development as one of its overarching priorities.
- b) Strategic framework, goals and relevant action plans are established, in place, actively being pursued, and are effectively and continually fostering the attainment of the institution's vision and mission.
- c) Its strategic framework, strategic goals and action plans invariably include the adoption and institutionalization of outcomes-based education throughout the institution and, especially, in engineering and technology.

**TC1.2. Formulation, Periodic Review and Deployment of Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals** – The HEI has in place an effective system for the formulation, review and deployment of its vision, mission and strategic goals across all divisions and throughout all levels of the organization and among its stakeholders.

- a) There is in place a formal mechanism for the formulation, assessment and periodic review of the vision, mission and strategic goals of the HEI to keep abreast of and effectively respond to the changing development needs of the country and the region.
- b) Stakeholders and wide representation from the various economic sectors, industry, government, and the engineering community are formally and actively engaged in the formulation and review of the VMGs of the HEI and its engineering educational units.
- c) Robust deployment plans and systems are in place to ensure the VMGs permeate the divisions and all levels of the institution's organization.
- d) Inputs from the various stakeholders and partners as well as from results of environmental scanning, surveys and relevant studies are invariably used in the process of formulation and review.

**TC1.3. Partnerships and Linkages** - The HEI and its EEU have continually gained prominence and have become valued partners to the industry, the government, the community, the professional and non-governmental organizations and other HEIs in the country and internationally. Through benchmarking, forging of national and international partnerships and linkages, and the provision of extension services to the communities around it, the HEI and its EEU have transformed themselves into models of global competitiveness that other institutions have emulated and against whom these institutions benchmark themselves.

- a) There is in place and implemented a strategic plan to develop partnerships and linkages with relevant parties within the country and across the region.
- b) The institution has developed an array of partners and linkages that have impacts on its mandate and VMGs.

- c) The impact of the partnerships and linkages established is regularly assessed and evaluated and the results are used to further improve the attainment of its VMGs.

## Tier Criterion 2 – Institutional Leadership, Governance and Management

The institution has established leadership and governance arrangements including a clear, documented organizational authority and responsibility, organizational structure, policies, resources, systems and processes to carry out its strategic initiatives; continually improve the operations, quality and developments for more efficient and effective management; maintain balance between autonomy and public accountability in all its undertakings; and, establish and operate a sustainable resource generation strategies to support the institution's operations and development plans. The said strategic initiatives invariably include the establishment and institutionalization of outcomes-based engineering education (OBE).

The institution will be assessed and evaluated in the following elements herein below detailed:

**TC2.1. Leadership, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability** – The institution has an established leadership, duly constituted, with the capacity and the institutional autonomy to set and lead the implementation of the strategic directions of the institution and whose decision making processes are invariably free from undue outside influences, albeit, balanced with public accountability.

- a) The institution has clear standards and an established system for appointing or electing members of the governing body and management.
- b) The institution leadership regularly conducts strategic planning and periodic reviews of its goals and strategies to ensure that these are constructively aligned to the institution's mandate and purposes and its VMGs.
- c) The decision-making process of the governing body and management clearly involves the highest consideration of public accountability, risk management and mitigation, ethical practice and transparency.

**TC2.2. Organizational Structure and Responsibilities** – The institution has established and maintains a robust organization, manned by sufficient personnel with appropriate qualifications and competencies and with clear duties and responsibilities to undertake their respective roles. Academic personnel, administrative and support staff are regularly informed and are involved especially as regards decisions on educational quality objectives and outcomes of the institution. There is in place and being implemented professional development plan for its personnel.

- a) The organizational structure with the accompanying functional descriptions, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly spelled out, widely disseminated and understood by all concerned thereby enabling a consistent and effective communication and implementation of policies, guidelines, systems and procedures.
- b) Succession arrangements are in place and supported by effective

recruitment and on-boarding systems, continuing performance evaluation and retention strategies, processes, and standards for all its personnel.

- c) There is sufficient and appropriate authority accompanying the responsibilities assigned to personnel to participate actively in the planning for and implementation of their roles.
- d) There are sufficient and appropriate professional development plans for all personnel.

**TC 2.3. Institutional Resources, Systems and Processes** – The institution has established, implements and maintains formal management systems and procedures, enabling features and other strategic arrangements that give the HEI the capacities to effectively respond to changing needs of society, improve operations, quality and development outcomes, and, generate and provide sufficient human, physical and other resources necessary to sustainably support its operations and development plans.

- a) Management systems, policies, procedures and processes critical to the successful realization of an institution's mission and goals are established, widely deployed, implemented and maintained taking into consideration best practices adopted from benchmarking and other process improvement activities.
- b) The management systems, policies and procedures are periodically assessed and reviewed, internally and externally, to establish and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the same in the attainment of the goals and objectives.
- c) There is an effective system that implements the financial strategy of the HEI, continually ensures the generation and the provision of sufficient and appropriate human, physical and other resources on a timely basis to support operations and development plans of the institution.

**TC2.4 Institutional Performance Effectiveness and Outcomes** – The institution has established and consistently demonstrated robust performance according to its goals and desired outcomes towards the attainment of its vision and mission and the continuing fulfillment of its mandate in a manner that is satisfactory to stakeholders and the general public.

- a) The institution has recorded a consistent high level of performance according to its goals and outcomes, especially academic and financial goals, that foster the attainment of its vision and mission and the fulfillment of its mandate.
- b) The institution has continually demonstrated and maintained its robustness over the years and has built its management, academic, and support service capabilities to ensure continuity and sustainability of operations and development plans.
- c) There is pervading the organization a culture of transparency, integrity and accountability underpinned by ethical standards manifested by consistent performance and respect for established processes, standards and organizational authority.

### Tier Criterion 3 – Quality Leadership, Quality System and Strategies

PTC takes the view that the capacity of the HEI to sustain the level of quality of its programs to international standards starts with institutional leadership taking primary responsibility for the quality of its programs and educational results. An unwavering commitment to establish and implement the process of setting the policy and translating the same into quality programs, desired learning outcomes and objectives is undoubtedly the first major step to ensuring sustainability of the program. The process should “begin with the end in mind”, i.e., desired quality outcomes and objectives are set within the context of the HEI’s vision, mission and strategic goals and gearing these to national or, at the least, regional development strategies and priorities, and, more importantly, to international comparability. Having established this above foundation, the leadership subsequently fosters the design and delivery of the needed resources (human, financial, and physical), appropriate learning environment, systems and processes and methodologies to ensure the effective, robust and sustainable delivery of the programs, services and outcomes to stakeholders.

In assessing and evaluating the capacity of the HEI under this criterion, the following elements and performance criteria shall be considered as detailed hereunder:

**TC3.1. Institutional Quality Leadership and Commitment** – The institution has the primary responsibility for quality and for this purpose, the HEIs governing body and Top Management promulgates and supports quality systems to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.

- a) The institution’s Top Management has clearly taken upon itself the primary responsibility for quality and this is widely recognized at all levels and divisions of the HEI’s organization and within the education community.
- b) The Top Management has caused the promulgation and provided consistent support to the institution-wide quality system and the necessary organizational infrastructures to ensure its effective implementation and sustainability.
- c) Top Management has caused the formulation and periodic reviews of the attainment of its strategic objectives and quality plans as part of the institution’s higher level strategic initiatives.
- d) Top Management has caused the adoption of a holistic approach to the development of tertiary education, especially engineering and technology education, that puts emphasis on outcomes and objectives, which are benchmarked against international standards and for global comparability.

**TC3.2. Institutional Quality Assurance System (IQA System)** – a structured and functional quality assurance system with clearly defined responsibilities exists and that sufficient resources to support the activities related thereto are provided regularly.

- a) There is in place an integrated quality assurance system, embedded and working well within the wider institutional management system, that enables the effective deployment of the quality function and responsibilities to all operating and support services units;

- b) The IQA invariably includes responsibilities of the functional units, such as departments, faculties and other service centers, and the system for teaching, learning and assessment, and the continual attainment of learning outcomes and program objectives, and, thereby, enabling the functional units to get actively involved in IQA at their levels.
- c) There are evidence that sufficient and appropriate resources, which include human and financial, are provided to support and maintain the systems and IQA activities for effective implementation and sustainability;
- d) The IQA system is periodically reviewed and audited by internal and external bodies.

**TC3.3. Institutional Quality Planning, Assessment and Review** – The institution has established and effectively implements formal mechanisms for institutional quality planning, assessment and review participated in actively by the various sectors in the institution and which takes into account and considers inputs from external stakeholders.

- a) The HEI conducts regular strategic quality planning, assessment and review to ensure that these are aligned with overall institutional strategies and the needs of the stakeholders;
- b) There is a formal mechanism for the formulation and approval, periodic review, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of programs and awards that takes into consideration and ensures quality.
- c) There is evidence that approved quality plans are widely disseminated and deployed to all units across levels and divisions of the institution.

**TC3.4. Institutional Quality Performance and Results** – the institution has continually achieved milestones on quality that it has set for itself; has gained prominence among HEIs and quality-recognition bodies; and, has for some time become a model and benchmark for quality and quality management in the country.

- a) The HEI has set for itself realistic, however, benchmark-setting milestones and quality objectives, the achievement of which has impacted not only the institution but also a bigger part of the wider engineering community;
- b) The HEI has an array of formal recognitions by third party institutions and government which highlight the achievements of the institutions in the area of quality and quality management practices;
- c) There is evidence that the HEI has shared with, and to a large extent, mentored other institutions and even government agencies, on quality and quality management practices.

End of Section

## Part B. Self-Tiering Assessment Report (STAR)

The STAR is a document prepared by the HEIs to explain the extent to which the HEI meets the criteria for tier classification. PTC shall evaluate the HEIs based on the STAR. It is therefore incumbent upon the HEI to ensure that sufficient documentation and evidences are presented in the STAR to demonstrate compliance to the criteria. A 1-day verification visit may be conducted by PTC, as may be necessary, to afford the HEI every opportunity to demonstrate compliance. The classification decision by PTC is final.

A HEI which has previously submitted its STAR and has been given a tier classification may wish to update the information provided therein. Moreover, the HEI may also consider requesting reclassification if there are substantial changes that could support reclassification. The request for reclassification may only be made after one (1) year from the preceding tier classification process.

The STAR is an essential part of the pre-qualification process which gives the HEI's the opportunity to reflect on how it measures up to the tier criteria and gather the key documentation and evidences to demonstrate compliance to the said criteria. The STAR normally provides a substantial portion of the evidence upon which the tier classification of the HEI shall be based. It is important that the report provides clear and sufficient information and that its contents are corroborated by documentary and/or oral evidence.

The STAR has three purposes:

- To present a succinct but analytical and comprehensive presentation of the HEI's approach to compliance with the criteria of the tier classification
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the HEI, identify the opportunities and threats it faces, and propose specific actions to address them; and
- To provide a starting point for the reviewer's work.

Therefore, the STAR should not only be descriptive, but analytical, evaluative, and synthetic.

## Part C. Self-Tiering Assessment Report (STAR) Guidelines

### Guidelines for the Preparation of STAR

In preparing the STAR, the HEI should be guided by the STAR Guidelines which shall be made available to the HEIs upon confirmation of their intent to apply. The STAR Guidelines are presented in a separate cover.