

Q & A on Foreign Students Guidelines

Who are considered foreign student?

- Foreign students are those belonging or owing allegiance to a country other than the Philippines and studying in any educational institution authorized or owned by the government of the Philippines

Who is bonafide foreign student?

- A bonafide foreign student is one who is at least eighteen years of age at the time of enrollment, has sufficient means for his/her education and support and who seeks to enter the Philippines for temporary stay with the purpose of taking up a course of study higher than high school at a university, college or school authorized to accept foreign students.

What is the legal basis for the entry and stay of foreign students in the Philippines?

- The entry and stay of foreign in the country is covered by Executive Order (EO) 285 dated September 4, 2000, which amended the provisions of EO 423 of 1997 Re: Guidelines Governing the Entry and Stay of Foreign Student in the Philippines and the Establishment of an Inter-Agency Committee on Foreign Student for the Purpose. The implementing guidelines of this EO are specified in IACFS Memorandum No. 1, s. 2000 & IACFS Memo No. 1 s. 2001.

What is the composition of the Inter-Agency Committee on Foreign Students (IACFS)?

- The IACFS is composed of the following:

Chairman - Chairperson, Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
Vice-Chairman - Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)
Members - Commissioner, Bureau of Immigration (BI)
Director, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)
Director General, National Intelligence and Coordinating Agency (NICA)

What is the pre-requisite for enrollment of a foreign student at the tertiary or college level?

- A prospective foreign student-applicant for the tertiary or college level should be a high school/secondary school graduate or its equivalent.

What Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are authorized to accept foreign students?

- Only HEIs with programs accredited by agencies under the Federations of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) or with equivalent accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and by the Bureau of Immigration (BI), are authorized to admit foreign students.

What are the salient provisions of EO 285?

7.1. Only schools with programs accredited by agencies under the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) or with equivalent accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education and by the Bureau of Immigration shall be authorized to admit foreign students.

7.2. Authorization for the conversion from tourist visa category to student visa or issuance of Special Permit (SSP).

7.3. Establishment of a Bureau of Immigration Foreign Student Desk.

What are the procedural guidelines to be observed and documentary requirements to be complied with in the issuance of Student Visa for applicant still abroad?

8.1. Student-applicant communicates with any Philippine HEI authorized to accept foreign students and complies with the following required documents:

- Five (5) copies of the Student's Personal History Statement (PHS) duly signed by him, both in English and in his national alphabet accompanied by his personal seal if any, containing among others, his left and right thumb-prints and a 2 x 2 inch photograph on plain white background taken not more than six months prior to submission;
- Transcript of Records/Scholastic Records duly authenticated by the Philippine Foreign Service Post (PFSP) located in the student-applicant's country of origin or legal residence;
- A notarized Affidavit of Support including bank statements or notarized grant for institutional scholars, to cover expenses for the student's accommodation and subsistence, as well as school dues and other incidental expenses; and
- Photocopy of the student's passport showing date and place of birth and birth certificate or its equivalent duly authenticated by the PFSP.

8.2. Upon compliance of the required documents and subject to entrance requirement of the accepting school, HEI issues Notice of Acceptance (NOA).

8.3. For those desiring to enroll in Medicine and Dentistry, their documents shall be submitted to the Office of Student Development and Services (OSDS), CHED for evaluation and if found in order, a Certificate of Eligibility for Admission (CEA) is issued.

8.4. HEI then submits the documents, including the certified true copy of the CEA of those enrolling in Medicine or Dentistry if applicable to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)

8.5. DFA endorses the documents to the PFSP in the student's country of origin or legal residence for the issuance of the corresponding visa.

8.6. PFSP notifies the student-applicant with instruction that he appears in person before the Consular Officer for interview and submission of required documents, as follows:

- Original copy of the school's Notice of Acceptance (NOA) containing a clear impression of the school's dry seal;
- Original copy of the Certificate of Eligibility for Admission (CEA) issued by CHED if enrolling in Medicine or Dentistry;

- Police clearance issued by the national police authorities in the student's country of origin or legal residence, duly authenticated by the PFSP having consular jurisdiction over the plane; and
- Medical Health Certificate issued by an authorized physician including but not limited to standard-size chest X-ray, HIV, Hepatitis-B clearance. The Consular Office shall not assume the task of determining the student's scholastic fitness for the program applied for and shall issue the student visa as soon as all the requirements are accomplished.

8.7. Foreign student reports to the BI Student Desk for registration and to the accepting HEI and shall enroll in the school which issued his NOA upon arrival in the Philippines;

8.8. Accepting HEI shall assist foreign student to obtain Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR) and Certificate of Residence of Temporary Student (CRTS) from the Bureau of Immigration (BI); and

8.9. DFA sends notice to accepting HEI on the issuance of student visa to the applicant, copy furnished CHED, BI, NICA and NBI.

What is Certificate of Eligibility for Admission to a Medical/Dental program?

- A certificate of Eligibility for Admission to a Medical program (CEM)/Dental program (CED), is issued to a foreign student by the CHED-OSDS, upon compliance of the documentary requirements.

What are the documentary requirements for the issuance of CEM/CED?

- Scholastic records signed by the College/University Registrar and stamped with the school seal; (the diploma/certificate) of graduation maybe required if the scholastic records do not indicate graduation from the course).
- Birth Certificate/passport;
- Notice of Acceptance from the admitting school;
- (For medicine only) Diploma or Certificate of Graduation from an allied collegiate courses;
- NMAT (for Medicine only); and
- Payment of P500.00 per CEM/CED

Can foreign students already in the Philippines be allowed to apply for student visa?

- Yes, EO 285 provides the authority for conversion of tourist visa category to student visa. The concerned foreign student shall be issued a Student Visa or Special Study Permit subject to compliance with BI requirements.

What are the documentary requirements to be complied with for the change/conversion of admission status of an alien to that of a student?

- An alien admitted into the Philippines under any visa category may apply at the Bureau of Immigration (BI) Student Visa Section for the change/conversion of his/her admission status to that of a student, subject to the following requirements:

- Written indorsement from the school for the change/conversion of admission status of the alien to that of a student;
- Original copy of the Notice of Acceptance (NOA) containing a clear impression of the school's official dry seal;
- Certified true copy of the Certificate of Eligibility for Admission (CEA) issued by the Commission on Higher Education in the case of students in the Medicine and Dentistry;
- Proof of adequate financial support to a cover expenses for the student's accommodation and subsistence, as well as school dues and incidental expenses;
- Scholastic records duly authenticated by the Philippine Foreign Service Post (PFSP) located in the student's country of origin or legal residence;
- Police Clearance Certificate issued by the National Police Authorities in the student's country of origin or residence duly authenticated by the PFSP having consular jurisdiction over the place, for the student who resided in the Philippines for less than 59 days. However, those who resided in the Philippines for more than 59 days at the time he applies for the said change/conversion of admission status, shall also be required to submit a National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Clearance.
- Quarantine Medical Examination by the National Quarantine Office;
- Copy of the student's Personal History Statement (PHS) signed by him/her with 2 x 2 inch photograph recently taken; and
- Photocopy of the picture, data and stamp of the latest arrival pages of the student's passport. The passport itself shall be presented to the Bureau of Immigration (BI) for verification.

How long is the student's authorized period of stay in the Philippines?

- The student's authorized period of stay shall be consistent with the length of the course to which he has been accepted by a Philippine school. The initial period is one year and then renewed/extended by the BI Student Visa Section every year.

What are the documentary requirements to be complied with for the extension of stay as a student?

- Written indorsement from the school for the extension of the student visa of the alien;
- Application from duly accomplished by the student;
- Two (2) 2 x 2 photographs;
- Photocopy of the picture, data and stamp of the latest arrival, pages of the passport of the students or Certificate of Identity;
- Transcript of Records signed by the Dean or Registrar with its seal for 1st extension only. No need for the same on 2nd or succeeding extension;
- Grades for the previous semester both 1st and succeeding extensions;
- Photocopy of the Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR), Certificate of Residence for Temporary Students (CRTS) and 9(f) visa stamp on the passport for 1st extension only;
- Explanation by the student and confirmed by the School Registrar of Dean in the case of one who took less than the required normal/regular full load per semester as follows:
 - a. Undergraduate at least 15 units

b. Graduate Student (MA) at least 12 units

However, graduating students and those enrolled in the College of Medicine may have less than the aforesaid number of units.

- Explanation by the student in case of failures, incomplete grades, dropped or withdrawals of two (2) or more subject equivalent to six (6) or more units as confirmed by the School Registrar or Dean of the School;
- Notice of Acceptance/registration card for the incoming semester; and
- Approval of the admitting school in cases of school transfer, course shifting or enrollment in a master or doctorate studies related to the student's bachelor degree.

Who are the foreigners exempted from securing Student Visa 9(f) and Special Study Permit?

- For enrolment in tertiary schools, student visa and BI Special Study Permit, shall not be required of the spouses and unmarried dependent children below 21 years old of aliens under the following categories:
 - Permanent foreign residents;
 - Alien with valid working permits under Section 9(d), 9(g) and 47 (a)(2) of the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, as amended;
 - Personnel of foreign diplomatic and consular missions residing in the Philippines and their dependents;
 - Personnel of duly accredited international organizations residing in the Philippines and their dependents;
 - Holders of Special Investor's Resident Visa (SIRV) and Special Retiree's Resident Visa (SRRV); and
 - Foreign students coming to the Philippines with 47(a) (2) visas issued pursuant to existing laws, e.g. PD 2021.

When is the FS required to secure endorsement form CHED?

- Shifting of program and/or transfer of school requires prior CHED clearance/endorsement through the OSDS

Who should apply for CHED endorsement?

- The authorized/designated school representative shall apply for CHED clearance, and transaction should be done between the school representative and the concerned government agency.

What steps should be undertaken by HEIs authorized to accept foreign students before the issuance of EO 285 but do not meet the FAAP Agency or CHED equivalent accreditation requirements?

- These HEIs will have to show that initials steps towards accreditation is being done, through a certification issued by CHED.

Who monitors the HEI's compliance with the requirements within the time prescribed by the FAAP agencies?

- CHED shall monitor these HEIs to find out if indeed compliance is being undertaken.

What happens if the requirements are not complied by the HEIs concerned?

- The authority to accept foreign students by these HEIs shall be withdrawn.

What agency/agencies conduct/s spot inspection visits?

- Spot inspection visits shall be jointly conducted by CHED and BI.

How many times will spot visits to the HEIs be done?

- Spot visit shall be done only once in an HEI to verify authenticity of documentary and other requirements. No inspection of facilities shall be undertaken. Only in the event of problems like visa requirement/violations and upon invitation as resource person/speaker in seminar/workshop, shall extra visits be done.

What happens to HEIs with applications for inclusion in the BI listing but are without the required accreditation or CHED equivalence?

- HEIs' applications for inclusion in the BI listing shall be held pending. However, those with the applications for accreditation with FAAP upon recommendation of CHED, shall be issued provisional authority to accept foreign students by BI.

What sanction will be imposed on any foreign student found to have enrolled without the appropriate visa to study or Special Study Permit (SSP)?

- The foreign student concerned shall be charged a fine of Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00) and subsequent deportation.

What sanction will be imposed on HEIs found to have violated the provisions of EO 285 and IACFS No. 1, s. 2000?

- The concerned HEI's authority to accept foreign students shall be cancelled/revoked and/or pay a fine of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00).