Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Region 02

CHEDRO 2
RELEASED
Date: 12/15/21
Signature:

REGIONAL MEMORANDUM ORDER
No.380 series of 2021

FOR : **ALL CONCERNED PRESIDENTS/OFFICERS-IN-CHARGE/HEADS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN REGION 2 AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT FOREIGN STUDENTS**

SUBJECT : **INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE ENTRY, RE-ENTRY AND STAY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC**

DATE : **DECEMBER 14, 2021**

Attached is a copy of the signed interim guidelines from **DR. J. PROSPERO E. DE VERA III,** Chairman, Commission on Higher Education regarding the Entry, Re-Entry and Stay of Foreign Students in the Philippines during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The said guidelines have been approved for the purpose of an Entry Exemption Document addressed to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for those Foreign Students with the appropriate entry visa to enter/re-enter and travel to the Philippines and to continue their studies in their respective Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

A copy of which may be accessed through the link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w0xRrmU4iVi5h88XHwcZTpcWW3gjzu-L/view?usp=sharing

JULIETA M. PARAS, Ed.D., CESE
Director IV

For the Director IV

RUTH T. LASAM
Chief Administration Officer
OIC-Office of the Director IV
December 14, 2021

Kindly rate the delivery of our services through the link below:
Link: http://bit.ly/CHEDRO2CSS
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and procedures so we can better serve you.
Thank you.

Encl.: as stated

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Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Commission on Higher Education
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INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE ENTRY, RE-ENTRY AND STAY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By virtue of the Revised Bureau of Immigration (BI) Advisory Guidelines issued pursuant to the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) Resolution Nos. 97 and 98 s. 2021 allowing foreign nationals/students to return to the Philippines, and CHED Commission en Banc (CEB) Resolution No. 693-2021 s. 2021, the Commission has approved the issuance of these Interim Guidelines for the purpose of an Entry Exemption Document addressed to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for those Foreign Students with the appropriate entry visa to enter/re-enter and travel to the Philippines and to continue their studies in their respective Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Background:

In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, foreign embassies with the assistance of CHED, have organized the repatriation of respective nationals. Consequently, the HEIs have adopted flexible learning modalities and approaches so that Foreign Students can continue their studies and complete their academic requirements, even if they are outside of the Philippines.

Through the Office of Student Development and Services (OSDS), the CHED has closely collaborated and coordinated with the Inter-Agency Committee on Foreign Students (IACFS). The latter is composed of representatives from the BI, the DFA, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), and the Office of the President - General Government Administration Office (OP-GGAO). IACFS discussed urgent issues and concerns affecting Foreign Students during the pandemic. The OSDS has likewise collaborated and sought the recommendations of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Health – Bureau of Quarantine (DOH-BOQ).

Pursuant to the Revised BI Advisory Guidelines issued in accordance with the latest IATF-EID Resolutions, holders of 9(A) or tourist visas may be allowed to travel to the Philippines subject to the presentation of requirements under the said Advisory. The Advisory covers foreign students who are currently in their home countries with expired student visas[1]. As such, a Foreign Student with an expired student visa needs to secure a DFA Endorsement in order to facilitate the process for the issuance of an appropriate entry visa by the Philippine Embassy (PE) abroad.

II. Coverage:

1. Foreign Students who are currently in their home country may ***apply for a DFA Endorsement*** as an Entry Exemption Document for the issuance of an appropriate entry visa for entry/re-entry and travel back to the Philippines, to wit:

   1.1 He/she must be currently in his/her home country/place of residence;
   1.2 He/she is a holder of an expired student visa;
   1.3 He/she is currently enrolled in a Philippine HEI allowed by CHED to offer and to conduct limited face-to-face classes per CHED-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 2021-001 and such other CHED issuances related thereto;
   1.4 He/she has been fully vaccinated in his/her country of origin/place of residence;

[1] Pursuant to BI Memorandum Circular SBM-2015-007, an expired student visa is downgraded to a tourist visa.

Higher Education Development Center Building, C.P. Garcia Ave., UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Website: www.ched.gov.ph Tel. Nos.: 441-1177, 385-4391, 441-1169, 441-1149, 441-1170, 441-1216, 392-5296, 441-1220
441-1228, 988-0002, 441-0750, 441-1254, 441-1235, 441-1255, 441-8910, 441-1171, 352-1871

1.5 His/her country of origin has no travel ban to the Philippines per latest IATF Resolution[2]; and
1.6 Must have a valid and subsisting health insurance coverage that is recognized in the Philippines.

2. Procedure: The Foreign Student

2.1 Submits the following documents to his/her HEI, which in turn will submit to the concerned CHEDRO together with the institution's requirements, as provided for in Section C.1 of these Guidelines:

2.1.1 Electronic copy of Letter of Request for Issuance of an Entry Exemption Document as required by the Philippine Embassy in his/her home country; and
2.1.2 Photocopy of his/her Passport (pages on the personal data and visa) to certify as a true copy by the authorized school official compared with the one on record with the HEI.

2.2 Strictly complies and observes at all times at the port of entry the preventive measures and health and safety protocols set by the appropriate national government agencies (NGAs), LGUs, and HEIs, including, but not limited to:

2.2.1 Presentation of the student's pre-booked accommodation. The length of their stay shall be subject to the category[3] of the country of origin, at the Immigration counters for an initial check[4];
2.2.2 Presentation of his/her proof of vaccination from his/her home country or WHO- issued ICV or Vax CertPH digital vaccination certificate;
2.2.3 Presentation of his/her valid travel credentials together with his/her copy of the DFA Endorsement for checking of BI to Immigration counters, upon arrival in the Philippines;
2.2.4 Undergoing RT-PCR test[5], to be conducted by authorized and accredited BOQ testing laboratories, and presentation of the result within its validity period, as required by the concerned NGAs and LGUs, the expense of which may be shouldered by the foreign student or agreed upon between the Foreign Student and his/her HEI;
2.2.5 Completion of a health assessment to be supervised by medical doctors upon arrival in Philippine airport; and
2.2.6 Registration with StaySafe.ph system, the primary contact tracing system in the Philippines.

Foreign Students who are currently in their home countries are advised to refer to the latest issuances on travel, health, and safety protocols from the respective websites of the Philippine Embassy in their home countries.

III. Roles and Responsibilities:

A. Foreign Students

1. Coordinates immediately with the HEI Foreign Students Unit (FSU) to facilitate the application and conversion of student visa at the BI.

2. Registers with the StaySafe.ph system, the primary contact tracing system in the Philippines.

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[2] Refer to the latest IATF Resolution (http://www.iatf.doh.gov.ph) and respective Philippine Embassy website in the Foreign Student's Home Country for the latest Travel Advisories.
[3] For the latest category of country of origin, refer to the latest IATF Resolution (https://iatf.doh.gov.ph/?page_id=77)
[4] Refer to the latest IATF Resolution (http://www.iatf.doh.gov.ph) and BI Advisory (http://www.immigration.gov.ph/#advisory) for the required duration of stay in quarantine hotel/facility.
[5] Refer to the latest IATF Resolution (http://www.iatf.doh.gov.ph) and BI Advisory (http://www.immigration.gov.ph/#advisory) on the conduct of COVID19 testing upon arrival in the Philippines.

3. Uses the Integrated Terminal Exchange, the central hub for transportation, if HEIs are located outside the National Capital Region (NCR). The LGU of destination may provide for the transportation of the foreign student, upon proper coordination by the concerned HEI.

4. Presents a copy of pre-arranged board and lodging arrangements with a minimum duration of six months or for the whole duration of the foreign student's stay for purposes of study. The information shall be used for purposes of monitoring by the LGU and HEI FSU. Any change of address must be submitted to the HEI FSU, who will in turn inform the LGU and CHED.

5. At all time, observes and complies with all health protocols especially the health and quarantine protocols set by the LGU of the foreign student's HEI as well as their temporary residence in the Philippines.

6. Coordinates closely with the HEI FSU and his/her concerned Embassy in the Philippines for updates, information, and other assistance.

7. Keeps himself/herself abreast of the latest national and localized IATF and BI issuances affecting foreign nationals' entry, travel, and stay in the Philippines.

8. If applicable, registers for a COVID-19 vaccination pursuant to Department of Health (DOH) Department Memorandum No. 2021-0157. The Foreign Student may request assistance from his/her HEI's FSU or designated protocol team to facilitate registration for the vaccination within his/her LGU.

9. Procures health insurance and vaccination requirements and submits the same to the HEI FSU.

B. Higher Education Institutions

1. Submits the application documents of foreign students for DFA endorsement to CHEDRO.

2. Develops and strictly implements institutional policies and actions concerning compliance and conformance with the specified minimum public health standards pursuant to DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-015 and CHED-DOH JMC No. 2021-001.

3. Conduct consultations with concerned local health officials and local government units (LGUs) to determine the health situation in the locality, availability of public transportation and other support services necessary for the safe operation of the HEIs.

4. Develops an Emergency Plan[6] and establish protocols based on WHO Guidelines/IATF Resolution for the screening and response to a community-level transmission to stop the spread of the COVID-19 in case their localities will be placed under different levels of community quarantines or granular lockdowns.

5. Provides general preventive measures and health strategies pursuant to the Department of Health (DOH) Memorandum Order No. 2020-055, "Interim Guidelines on 2019 Corona Virus Acute Respiratory Disease (2019-nCOV-ARD) Response in School and Higher Education Institutions"

6. Coordinates with various health facilities where the Foreign Students are in, or to be deployed to and implement plans regarding the flexible curricular modification arrangements to facilitate the issuance of necessary certificates of completion[7].

7. Monitors the status of the Foreign Students who are enrolled and studying in their institutions who may have COVID-19 symptoms. For continuity of learning, the HEIs shall implement the appropriate flexible learning mode for the affected students.

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[6] CHED Advisory No. 2 issued on March 11, 2020.
[7] CHED Advisory No. 6 issued on April 13, 2020.

8. Coordinates with LGUs of origin and "receiving" LGUs and IATFs, on the health protocols to be complied with.

9. Updates itself of the localized health and safety protocols set by the LGU, where the HEI is located and apprises the Foreign Students of the set of rules to be followed for the entry, re-entry, and stay within the said locality.

10. Provides assistance as may be necessary in the event the FS gets infected with COVID-19 and/or stranded in a certain LGU due quarantine restrictions and/or requirement.

11. Assists the Foreign Students who have remained in the Philippines to register for vaccination within the LGU concerned is allowed by existing rules.

12. Through its FSU, communicates with the Foreign Student's Embassy, copy furnished the CHEDRO, in the event, a granular lockdown is again imposed, and the Foreign Student request to be repatriated to his/her home country.

13. Submits to the concerned CHEDRO a semestral report on the data of Foreign Students using the CHED prescribed template before the semester ends.

C. CHED Regional Offices (CHEDROs)

1. Evaluates the completeness of HEI's application upon the submission of the following documentary requirements, both in electronic and hard copies:

    1.1 Endorsement Letter to CHED signed by the School President/Head or authorized representative indicating the name of the Foreign Student, nationality, program (limited to programs specified in CHED-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular/s and other priority programs identified by CHED), semester and academic year enrolled;
    1.2 Copy of Certificate of Enrollment for the current semester and academic year being applied for, indicating the subjects enrolled in;
    1.3 Photocopy of the Foreign Student's passport (pages on personal data and visa) certified as a true copy by the authorized school official;
    1.4 Copy of Certificate of COVID-19 Vaccination in his/her home country/place of residence or WHO- issued ICV or Vax CertPH digital vaccination certificate; and
    1.5 Copy of valid and subsisting health insurance coverage that is recognized in the Philippines.

2. Endorses and forwards the documentary requirements and application to the OSDS to process CHED Endorsement to DFA.

3. Submits to the OSDS to consolidated semestral reports on the Foreign Student.

D. CHED Office of Student Development and Services

1. Evaluates HEI's application for DFA Endorsement forwarded by the CHEDRO based on the updated or latest IATF Guidelines on entry or re-entry and travel of foreign nationals, within five (5) working days upon receipt of the HEI's application.

2. Prepares DFA Endorsement and submits recommendation as to the completeness and appropriateness of the application to the Office of the Executive Director for the approval/signature of the CHED Chairperson.

3. Uploads the endorsement and supporting documents via the Request Form for entry exemption requests through the CHED focal point person for said requests, processing, and evaluation by the Visa Division, Office of Consular Affairs, DFA (DFA-OCA-Visa Division).

IV. Other Implementing Guidelines for the Entry, Re-entry and Stay of Foreign Students in the Philippines:

1. The DFA Endorsement is not an absolute authority. It does not guarantee the entry of Foreign Students seeking admission in the Philippines, as the same is subject to BI and DFA guidelines and the maximum capacity of inbound passengers at the port and date of entry.[8]

2. The Foreign Students who are currently in their home countries and enrolled in HEIs through the flexible learning approaches and modalities but are not required to participate in the limited face to face classes, are not covered by these guidelines.

3. The issuance of DFA Endorsement is temporary and shall only be implemented until the IATF-EID lifts travel restrictions and DFA visa issuances resume.

4. Requests for DFA Endorsements directly received by the CHEDRO and/or OSDS from the Foreign Students should be forwarded to the concerned HEIs for processing.

V. Violations:

Any violation of the provision of these interim guidelines, after due process, shall be a ground for CHED to recommend before the Bureau of Immigration the following:

a) For higher education institution - cancellation of authority to admit foreign students

b) For foreign students – cancellation of student visa

VI. Amendments:

These Interim Guidelines may be amended or superseded by subsequent guidelines and pronouncements by the IATF-EID.

VII. Effectivity Clause:

These Interim Guidelines shall take effect immediately.

J. PROSPERO E. DE VERA III, DPA
Chairman

[8] Subject to latest IATF Resolution (http://www.iatf.doh.gov.ph).