



**CHED MEMORANDUM ORDER**

No. 12

Series of 2026

**SUBJECT : GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMERGENCY EXPEDITED ETEEAP LANE (E3 LANE) FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) AFFECTED BY THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Under the pertinent provisions of Republic Act (RA) No. 7722, otherwise known as the “Higher Education Act of 1994” and RA No. 12124 or “Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) Act.,” and by virtue of Commission en banc (CEB) Resolution No. 237-2026, the Commission hereby issues these guidelines, for the guidance and compliance of all concerned:

**Section 1. RATIONALE**

The ongoing armed conflict in parts of the Middle East has significantly disrupted the lives and livelihoods of many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), forcing thousands to return to the Philippines under emergency or repatriation circumstances. These workers, many of whom have spent years abroad contributing to the economic stability of their families and the nation, now face uncertainties related to employment, financial stability, and reintegration into the domestic labor market.

A considerable number of OFWs possess extensive professional and technical experience acquired through years of employment overseas. However, despite their skills and competencies, many remain disadvantaged in the Philippine labor market due to the absence of formal academic credentials that would validate and recognize their experiential learning. This gap limits their opportunities for employment, career advancement, and economic recovery upon returning to the country.

The Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) provides a strategic mechanism for addressing this challenge. Established to recognize prior learning, work experience, and non-formal education, ETEEAP allows qualified individuals to obtain academic degrees based on demonstrated competencies and professional practice. For returning OFWs, the program offers a pathway to translate their work experience into recognized academic qualifications that can facilitate their reintegration into the local workforce.

In light of the urgent circumstances faced by OFWs affected by the Middle East conflict, there is a compelling need to introduce an emergency expedited processing lane within the ETEEAP framework. This initiative would prioritize the assessment and processing of applications from repatriated OFWs, enabling them to obtain the academic recognition necessary for employment or professional advancement in the shortest possible time.

## Section 2. PURPOSE

The establishment of this expedited lane will serve several important objectives:

- a. To provide immediate educational and professional support to displaced OFWs as they transition back into the Philippine economy;
- b. To contribute to the government's broader reintegration programs by equipping returning workers with formal credentials that align with their actual skills and experience;
- c. To reinforce the commitment of the higher education sector to respond proactively to national and global crises affecting Filipino workers.

Furthermore, the initiative aligns with the broader goals of inclusive and accessible education by ensuring that opportunities for academic recognition remain responsive to the needs of Filipinos in vulnerable circumstances. By institutionalizing an expedited pathway under ETEEAP for OFWs affected by armed conflict, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) affirms its role in supporting national resilience, workforce development, and social protection.

Ultimately, the **Emergency Expedited ETEEAP Lane (E3 Lane)** will not only assist returning OFWs in rebuilding their careers but will also harness their accumulated international experience as a valuable resource for national development.

## Section 3. COVERAGE

The E3 Lane shall apply to qualified OFWs who have been directly affected by the ongoing armed conflict and security instability in the Middle East and who are seeking to obtain an academic degree through the recognition of prior learning and professional experience.

Specifically, this initiative shall cover the following:

- a. OFWs who have been repatriated or displaced due to armed conflict, security threats, or emergency evacuation efforts in Middle Eastern countries, as documented by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), or the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).
- b. OFWs currently residing in or returning from affected Middle Eastern countries who are at risk of displacement or whose employment has been significantly disrupted due to the ongoing conflict.
- c. Qualified OFWs who possess substantial work experience, professional training, or technical competencies acquired through overseas employment that may be recognized under the ETEEAP as equivalent to academic learning outcomes required for a degree.
- d. Applicants who meet the minimum eligibility requirements of the ETEEAP, including but not limited to:
  - Relevant work experience aligned with the degree program being pursued;
  - Demonstrated competencies and prior learning that may be validated through assessment mechanisms under ETEEAP; and,
  - Compliance with documentary and assessment requirements prescribed by ETEEAP-deputized Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Applications submitted by eligible OFWs affected by the armed conflict in the Middle East shall be prioritized, processed and evaluated within the given expedited timeline identified herein.

This E3 Lane shall apply to degree programs offered by ETEEAP deputized HEIs, particularly those aligned with the professional and technical experience of returning OFWs, such as but not limited to programs in business administration, information technology, engineering, hospitality management, education, and other relevant disciplines, as a result of the ETEEAP demand survey conducted among OFWs.

The coverage of this initiative shall remain time-bound and subject to review by CHED, in coordination with relevant government agencies involved in OFW reintegration and welfare programs.

#### **Section 4. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

To ensure the effective implementation of the E3 Lane, the following operational guidelines shall be observed by CHED, participating HEIs, and partner government agencies.

a. **Establishment of the Emergency Expedited ETEEAP (E3) Lane**

The HEI shall establish an E3 Lane to facilitate the prioritization and faster evaluation of applications submitted by qualified OFWs affected by the armed conflict in the Middle East. Participating deputized HEIs shall designate a dedicated focal person or unit responsible for handling applications submitted under the E3 Lane.

b. **Identification and Endorsement of Eligible OFWs**

Eligible applicants shall include OFWs who meet the coverage criteria and who are:

- Repatriated or displaced due to the armed conflict in the Middle East; or
- Whose employment has been significantly disrupted by the conflict.

Applicants may be endorsed or validated through coordination with relevant government agencies like DMW, OWWA, DFA, or DOLE. Supporting documentation such as repatriation records, employment contracts, or proof of overseas work experience may be required.

c. **Application and Documentary Requirements**

Applicants shall submit the standard ETEEAP documentary requirements, which may include:

- Completed ETEEAP application form
- Curriculum vitae or portfolio of work experience
- Employment certificates or contracts indicating job responsibilities and duration of employment
- Training certificates, professional development records, or other evidence of competencies
- Identification documents and proof of OFW status

HEIs shall adopt flexible documentation procedures, recognizing that some OFWs may have lost or cannot immediately secure certain records due to emergency circumstances.

d. Prior Learning Assessment and Evaluation

Participating deputized HEIs shall conduct the prior learning assessment in accordance with existing ETEEAP policies while prioritizing OFW applicants under the E3 lane.

The assessment may include:

- Portfolio assessment
- Competency-based interviews
- Demonstration of skills or practical assessments
- Written examinations or validation tests, when necessary
- Evaluation of professional achievements and work outputs

The evaluation process shall ensure that academic standards and program learning outcomes are maintained, while allowing flexibility in scheduling and assessment methods.

e. Expedited Processing Timeline

To ensure timely assistance to returning OFWs, participating deputized HEIs shall adopt an accelerated evaluation timeline, which may include:

- Preliminary eligibility screening within 3-5 working days
- Completion of competency assessment within 10 days
- Issuance of degree recommendations upon completion of documentary requirements and validation of compliance with program outcomes

CHED may provide guidance to ensure uniformity and efficiency across participating HEIs.

f. Academic Enrichment and Additional Requirements

If competency gaps are identified during the assessment process, applicants may be required to complete enrichment courses, modular learning activities, or competency validation requirements as determined by the HEI. These requirements shall be designed to be flexible, competency-based, and responsive to the applicant's professional background.

g. Coordination with Reintegration Programs

ETEEAP-deputized HEIs shall coordinate with relevant government agencies involved in OFW reintegration to ensure that the ETEEAP expedited lane complements existing programs such as skills and employment assistance initiatives, entrepreneurship and livelihood programs, and career transition support services. This coordination aims to facilitate the smooth reintegration of OFWs into the Philippine labor market.

i. Information Dissemination and Outreach

CHED and participating deputized HEIs shall conduct information campaigns to ensure that affected OFWs are aware of the availability of the E3 Lane. These campaigns may include online information sessions and advisories, coordination with OFW help desks and reintegration centers, and social media and official website announcements

j. Duration and Review of the E3 Lane

The E3 Lane shall remain in effect for the duration of the crisis period and the subsequent reintegration phase, subject to periodic review by CHED. CHED may issue additional guidelines or modifications as necessary to respond to evolving circumstances affecting OFWs.

## Section 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that the implementation of the E3 Lane maintains the integrity, credibility, and academic rigor of the program while responding to urgent circumstances faced by affected Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), the following quality assurance mechanisms shall be observed:

a. Adherence to Existing ETEEAP Policies and Standards

All applications processed under the E3 Lane shall continue to comply with the existing policies, guidelines, and quality standards governing the ETEEAP, including competency-based evaluation, validation of prior learning, and alignment with program learning outcomes. The expedited process shall not compromise the academic integrity and rigor required for the conferment of degrees.

b. Competency-Based Assessment

Participating deputized HEIs shall ensure that all OFW applicants undergo a rigorous prior learning assessment to verify that their work experience, professional training, and competencies meet the required learning outcomes of the degree program.

Assessment mechanisms may include:

- Portfolio review and documentation of professional experience
- Competency-based interviews and panel evaluations
- Skills demonstrations or practical assessments
- Written examinations or validation tests where necessary

These assessments shall ensure that the applicant possesses competencies equivalent to those acquired through formal academic instruction.

c. Qualified Assessment Panels

Each participating HEI shall constitute an assessment panel composed of qualified faculty members, subject matter experts, and program coordinators to evaluate the competencies of OFW applicants. Panel members shall possess relevant academic qualifications and professional expertise in the discipline being evaluated to ensure accurate and fair assessment.

d. Program Learning Outcomes Alignment

HEIs shall ensure that the evaluation of applicants under the E3 lane remains aligned with the approved Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and curriculum requirements of the corresponding degree program. Any identified competency gaps shall be addressed through enrichment courses, modular learning activities, or competency validation requirements prior to the recommendation for degree conferment.

e. Documentation and Records Management

Participating HEIs shall maintain complete and verifiable records of all applications processed under the E3 Lane, including:

- Application documents
- Assessment results and evaluation reports
- Records of interviews, examinations, and competency validations
- Final recommendations for degree conferment

These records shall be made available for review by CHED for monitoring and compliance purposes.



f. **Monitoring and Oversight by CHED**

CHED shall conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation of participating deputized HEIs to ensure that the E3 lane adheres to ETEEAP quality standards. CHED may require submission of periodic reports containing:

- Number of OFW applicants processed
- Degree programs applied for
- Assessment results and completion rates
- Compliance with program requirements

CHED may also conduct audits, validation visits, or compliance reviews when necessary.

g. **Transparency and Accountability**

Participating HEIs shall ensure transparency in the evaluation and processing of applications by:

- Clearly communicating requirements and procedures to applicants
- Providing written feedback on assessment outcomes
- Ensuring that all evaluation decisions are properly documented and justified

This will safeguard the credibility and public trust in the ETEEAP system.

h. **Continuous Improvement**

CHED and deputized participating HEIs shall regularly review the implementation of the E3 Lane to identify operational challenges and opportunities for improvement.

**Section 6. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE**

If any part of this Order is declared unconstitutional or invalid, such parts or provisions thereof not so declared shall remain valid and subsisting.

**Section 7. EFFECTIVITY CLAUSE**

This policy shall take effect immediately after its issuance.

Quezon City, Philippines, May 11, 2026.



For the Commission:

SGD:

**SHIRLEY C. AGRUPIS, Ph.D.**  
Chairperson  
Commission on Higher Education

