



Legal Watch

CHED MEMORANDUM ORDER NO. 18, SERIES OF 2026



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SUMMARY

CHED Memorandum Order No. 18, Series of 2026 establishes updated, inclusive minimum standards for Student Affairs and Services (SAS) across all public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Superseding CMO No. 9, s. 2013 and CMO No. 8, s. 2021, this shifts CHED's regulatory approach to a developmental, positive reinforcement model anchored on a three-year SAS Compliance Certification.

While HEIs are granted a three-year transitory period to achieve full institutional compliance, standards concerning food safety, sanitation, and health services must be enforced immediately. Institutions are required to establish a centralized SAS office staffed by full-time, qualified personnel to oversee student welfare, manage grievance mechanisms, and ensure authorized student service fees are fully allocated and transparently utilized for SAS programs. The CMO encompasses basic SAS components tailored to address holistic student development and inclusivity.

Key operational mandates include sustaining a maximum ratio of one Registered Guidance Counselor for every 1,000 students per campus, operating a campus clinic staffed by at least one full-time Registered Nurse, and providing DOH-compliant food choices with clear dietary labels. Additionally, HEIs must implement restorative discipline through a multi-sectoral Student Discipline Committee that includes student council representatives, review and update student handbooks at least every five years with explicit rules on artificial intelligence and digital ethics, and enforce a 30-day payment moratorium on student loans and fees during declared states of calamity or emergency pursuant to Republic Act No. 12077. Dedicated support structures must also be provided for foreign students, learners with disabilities, and students with specific needs.

* Agency Name

Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

* Issuance Title

Inclusive and Comprehensive Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services

* Issuance Date

22 July 2026

* Link

<https://cms-cdn.e.gov.ph/CHED/pdf/2026-CMO-18-withannexes.pdf>





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ACTIONABLE ADVICE

To comply with CMO No. 18, s. 2026, higher education institutions should execute the following measures, among others:

1. Immediate Health & Safety: Inspect campus food vendors for valid sanitary permits and required dietary labeling. Ensure every campus clinic maintains at least one full-time Registered Nurse.
2. Governance & Auditing: Mobilize a cross-functional SAS taskforce to perform a baseline audit using CHED's Annex A instrument. Designate the SAS Office as the central grievance authority and include student council members on the Student Discipline Committee.
3. Policy Integration: Update the student handbook to incorporate explicit policies on Artificial Intelligence, technology ethics, and social media.
4. Staffing & Sector Support: Establish a multi-year staffing plan to reach the 1:1,000 counselor-to-student ratio and appoint focal persons for disability and specific-needs support.
5. CHED Reporting: Conduct annual self-assessments and submit implementation reports to CHEDRO to secure the 3-Year Compliance Certification.

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