K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in the Philippines

A guide for international students & families — how Philippine higher education works, the 9(f) Student Visa and ACR I-Card, affordable English-medium tuition, and medicine/nursing programs.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

ENGLISH-MEDIUM, AFFORDABLE, A HUB FOR MEDICINE & NURSING

The Philippines is a popular, affordable destination where **English is the medium of instruction** — so there's no language barrier — with respected universities and a big draw in **English-taught medicine (MD) and nursing**, whose degrees are widely recognized internationally. Non-EU students get a **9(f) Student Visa and an ACR I-Card**. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Philippine rules, tuition, and funds change. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Bureau of Immigration (BI), CHED, and your (BI-accredited) university**.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose the Philippines

WHAT TO KNOW

The Philippines offers **English-medium teaching (no language barrier), affordable tuition and living, respected universities, and globally recognized medicine and nursing degrees** — drawing students from across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

BY THE NUMBERS

English-medium	Affordable	Medicine & nursing
no language barrier	tuition & living	globally recognized

HOW TO HELP

Weigh the Philippines' **English-medium affordability and strong medicine/nursing** against restricted work rules — for English-taught health sciences on a budget, it's a leading choice.

GOOD TO KNOW

Philippine **MD/nursing degrees** from recognized universities are approved by the WHO and (for US practice) ECFMG — a big international draw.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Leading universities include the **University of the Philippines (UP)**, **Ateneo de Manila**, **De La Salle**, the **University of Santo Tomas (UST)**, **Mapúa** (engineering/IT), and **SWU PHINMA** (medicine). To enrol foreigners, a school must be **CHED-accredited and BI-accredited**.

BY THE NUMBERS

UP / Ateneo / De La Salle	UST / SWU PHINMA	Must be
top universities	medicine	CHED + BI-accredited

HOW TO HELP

Choose a **CHED-accredited, BI-accredited university** for your field (UP/Ateneo for breadth, UST/SWU PHINMA for medicine, Mapúa for engineering) — accreditation is essential for the visa.

WATCH OUT

The university **must be BI-accredited to enrol foreigners and issue the 9(f) documents** — verify before enrolling.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Get the 9(f) Student Visa & ACR I-Card

WHAT TO KNOW

Degree students need a **9(f) Student Visa** (age 18+). You can apply at a Philippine embassy with a **Notice of Acceptance (NOA)** and endorsements, or enter on a tourist (9a) visa and **convert to 9(f) in the Philippines**. After approval, secure an **ACR I-Card** (required for stays over 59 days), and file an **annual report**.

BY THE NUMBERS

9(f) visa	Or convert	ACR I-Card
for degrees	from a tourist visa	+ annual report

HOW TO HELP

Get your **NOA**, then apply for the **9(f) visa** (at an embassy or by conversion in the Philippines), and secure your **ACR I-Card** — your key ID for stays over 59 days.

GOOD TO KNOW

Short/non-degree courses (like ESL) use a **Special Study Permit (SSP), not the 9(f)** — confirm which applies to your program.

4

STEP 04 OF 10

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to CHED-recognized, BI-accredited universities**. Requirements include a **Notice of Acceptance (NOA)**, academic records, a **medical exam (chest X-ray, blood tests, often HIV)**, and a **police/NBI clearance**; some documents need apostille or embassy authentication.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	NOA	Medical + police
CHED/BI-accredited	+ academic records	clearances

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to accredited universities, secure your **NOA**, and prepare the required **medical exam and police clearance** (with apostille/authentication where needed).

GOOD TO KNOW

Requirements **vary by school and consular post** — follow your university's and the BI's official checklist.

5 STEP 05 OF 10

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is **affordable** (well below the US/UK/Australia), varying by program and school — **medicine is the higher outlier**. Some universities and organizations offer scholarships and partial tuition reductions. Living costs are low ($350–700/month).

BY THE NUMBERS

Affordable	Medicine	Low living
varies by program	the higher outlier	$350–700/mo

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **affordable tuition** (medicine is pricier) plus low living costs, and pursue university and organizational scholarships.

GOOD TO KNOW

Tuition **varies widely by program and school** — confirm the exact figure on the official university page.

6

STEP 06 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must show you can cover **tuition, housing, and living for at least one academic year** — via bank statements, a scholarship letter, or a notarized **Affidavit of Support** from a sponsor (a common baseline is around **PHP 50,000 per semester** or equivalent).

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Affidavit of Support	~PHP 50,000/sem
one academic year	common route	baseline

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** (bank statements, scholarship, or a notarized Affidavit of Support) covering at least one academic year of tuition and living.

GOOD TO KNOW

An **Affidavit of Support** from a parent/sponsor (with their financial documents) is a common way to prove funds.

7

STEP 07 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

There's effectively **no language barrier**: English is an official language and the **medium of instruction in universities**. Some programs may still ask for an English test (TOEFL/IELTS) depending on your background. Learning some Filipino helps daily life.

BY THE NUMBERS

English	No barrier	Some Filipino
medium of instruction	for most students	helps daily life

HOW TO HELP

You can study **entirely in English**; provide an English test only if your program requires it, and pick up some Filipino for daily life.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Philippines' **English-medium teaching** makes it very accessible for English-speaking students.

8

STEP 08 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, secure your **ACR I-Card, complete your medical clearance, and set up banking**. File your **annual report** at the BI and renew your visa each academic year. Living costs are low; Manila, Cebu, and Dumaguete are popular student cities.

BY THE NUMBERS

ACR I-Card	Annual report	Student cities
+ medical clearance	at the BI	Manila, Cebu, Dumaguete

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **ACR I-Card, medical clearance, banking** — and remember to file the **annual report** and renew your visa each year.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **ACR I-Card** is your official ID (needed for banking, travel, and renewals) — keep it with your passport.

9

STEP 09 OF 10

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Be clear on this: the **9(f) visa (and SSP) don't grant work authorization** — paid employment is generally restricted. Only **curriculum-required internships** may be allowed, if coordinated with your school (and the BI where needed). Get **written approval before any work**.

BY THE NUMBERS

No work authorization	Internships	Written approval
9(f)/SSP	if curriculum-required	before any work

HOW TO HELP

Understand that the **9(f) visa doesn't allow work**: budget to fund your studies, and only take a curriculum-required internship with your school's (and BI's) written approval.

WATCH OUT

Working on a 9(f)/SSP **without authorization is restricted** — ask your international office first and get approval in writing.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

For most graduates, medicine and nursing degrees are the payoff: **globally portable** (WHO, ECFMG, and various national councils). To work in the Philippines after study, you convert your **9(f) to a 9(g) work visa** and obtain an **AEP from DOLE** — which requires a job offer.

BY THE NUMBERS

MD/BSN	9(g) work visa	Needs
globally portable	+ AEP (DOLE)	a job offer

HOW TO HELP

Leverage your **globally recognized degree** (medicine/nursing especially), and if you want to work in the Philippines, plan the **9(f)→9(g) conversion and AEP** (a job offer is required).

GOOD TO KNOW

Post-study work needs a **9(g) work visa and an AEP** (with a job offer) — the student visa doesn't convert automatically.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in the Philippines: The Essentials

A snapshot — figures change, so confirm everything with the Bureau of Immigration (BI), CHED, and your university.

The system

University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle, University of Santo Tomas, Mapúa, SWU PHINMA and others; English-medium; universities must be CHED- and BI-accredited to enrol foreigners.

Visa & ACR I-Card

Degree students need a 9(f) Student Visa (age 18+; via an embassy or by conversion from a tourist visa), then an ACR I-Card (for stays over 59 days) and an annual BI report; SSP is for short/non-degree courses.

Tuition & funding

Affordable (well below Western fees; medicine is the higher outlier); university and organizational scholarships; living costs low ($350–700/month).

Money & language

Prove one academic year of tuition + living (bank statement, scholarship, or Affidavit of Support, ~PHP 50,000/semester baseline); English is the medium of instruction (no language barrier).

Work & after

The 9(f)/SSP don't grant work authorization (only curriculum-required internships with approval); post-study work needs a 9(g) work visa and an AEP (job offer required); MD/BSN degrees are globally portable.

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