**INTERNATIONALIZATION**

 **Ong joins CHED delegation for international qualifications programme in Malaysia**

Asst. Prof. Nestor Rubio Ong, M.S.I.E., P.I.E., ASEAN Eng, representing the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the University of Santo Tomas (UST), recently participated in the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Internship Programme 2024 in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The three-day program in September 2024 fostered the exchange of best practices and strengthened collaboration among quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions in Southeast Asia.

Ong, who serves as a Deputy Director at the UST-Office of QS/THE Rankings and a member of the CHED-iNRC (National Review Committee on CHED Funded Internationalization Programs), was granted a scholarship to participate in this exclusive internship. The internship program aimed to foster potential partnerships and collaborations between Philippine and Malaysian universities, aligning with CHED's goal of implementing Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) in the Philippines. This initiative resonates with UST's commitment to global engagement and continuous improvement in educational standards.

During the internship, Ong engaged in high-level discussions on several impactful topics, including establishing collaborative frameworks for joint degree programs to enhance academic offerings and provide students with diverse educational experiences or international learning opportunities. Harmonizing quality assurance standards and accreditation processes was also a key focus, as it is crucial for ensuring that programs meet international benchmarks, fostering mutual trust and recognition between institutions.

Additionally, the development of capacity-building initiatives for TNHE partnerships can strengthen these collaborations by equipping institutions with the necessary skills and resources. Promoting cultural exchange programs was another key topic, as such exchanges enrich the educational experience and promote understanding among students from different backgrounds. Finally, exploring avenues for joint research projects/opportunities can lead to innovative solutions and advancements, benefiting both institutions and society at large.

Reflecting on his internship experience, Ong emphasized the program’s impact on shaping international education strategies. He stated, "This internship has provided invaluable insights into Malaysia's approach to quality assurance in higher education. The knowledge and connections gained will significantly enhance the global competitiveness of Philippine higher education, including the University of Santo Tomas and other institutions."

A key highlight of the program was a meeting of Engr. Ong, Ms. Mabel A. Gutierrez the Officer-in-Charge of CHED International Affairs Service, and MQA officials responsible for internationalization. The meeting explored pathways for lecturer exchanges between the two countries, further strengthening bilateral educational ties and expanding collaboration opportunities.

The successful participation of Ong in the MQA Internship Programme 2024 marks a significant step towards implementing and advancing TNHE initiatives in the Philippines. It is expected to lead to enhanced quality assurance mechanisms, expanded international partnerships, and improved educational standards that align with global best practices.

There were 16 participants from various Southeast Asian countries, including Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, who took part in the MQA Internship Programme. Together with the Commission on Higher Education, the participants represented institutions such as the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education, Japan; the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan; Malaysian Medical Council; and Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia.

As the University continues to strengthen its position in the global education landscape, collaborations like these play a crucial role in shaping the future of higher education in the country. UST's involvement, through Ong's participation, reaffirms its commitment to upholding its tradition of excellence while embracing international cooperation and innovation in education.

[IMG\_0549.JPG](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f3dXKNM-erXTCvhKN7Vti_ClTvLfNR5U/view?usp=drive_link) *Engr. Ong*

[*IMG\_20250212\_160845.jpg*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y4qIT7cK3tHDXYZt1GUCUjLXmMSa7_m4/view?usp=drive_link) *Engr. Ong (seated, second row, second from left) with fellow participants of the Quality Assurance programme*