

# Increasing Supply of Accountants: A Reevaluation of the Accountancy Program Retention Policy in a State University in the Philippines

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**Abstract**— This study evaluates the Qualifying Examination (QE) as a retention policy in the BSA program at a State University in the Philippines. The QE is widely employed in the country to gauge program quality and selectively admit students to advance within the BSA program. However, this contributes to the program's low graduation rates due to the significant disqualification of students. The research re-examines the features and implementation of the QE at the State University to identify factors that may hinder or further decrease the supply of accountants in the Philippines. A qualitative approach was adopted, and thematic analysis was performed to generate qualitative data. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to gather findings. The primary result underscores the endorsement of the QE in the BSA program. However, participants expressed reservations about its features and implementation, indicating a need for reevaluation or restructuring of the retention policy. These concerns emerged from their experiences with the examination, aiming to prevent prospective students from being deterred or removed from the program. Significantly, the study's findings suggest a decline in the supply of accountants due to the QE. The study proposes the implementation of student-centric retention policies in the BSA program to enhance graduation rates while maintaining the quality of students.

**Index Terms**— policy, qualifying, reevaluation, retention, supply.

## 1. Introduction

Achieving equilibrium between the growing demand for accountants and the available supply poses a considerable challenge faced by numerous developing and developed countries, as stated by Tiron-Tudor et al. (2019). Based on the recent Jobs and Labor Market Forecast 2022-2025 Preliminary Report by the Bureau of Local Employment, there is an actual occupational shortage for accountants, meaning there has been a deficiency in the supply of qualified applicants compared with the number of jobs available. In the same report, audit and accounting were considered cross-cutting occupations. Hence, the high demand for accountants may be associated with the supply shortage.

In the Philippines, despite the high demand of Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA) program, Cammayo and

Gonzales (2022) highlighted that only 14% of those who enrolled from 2015 to 2017 in 572 Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines completed the program. Velasco (2019) identified that the latter may correlate with the perception of an accountancy degree as more challenging than other business majors, contributing to the low graduation rates.

This perception of the difficulty of the undergraduate program is mainly reinforced by the Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE). Critics often cite it as one of the most challenging board examinations (Mangoma, 2023). Notably, there has been a declining trend in CPALE passing rates over the last five years (Laguador & Refozar, 2020). Valcarcel (2018) presented historical data from the first CPALE in May 1932 until 2017, wherein out of 718,089 test-takers, only 182,320 passed, resulting in a passing rate of 25% only. These statistics have given an alarming signal for the HEIs and the Board of Accountancy (BOA) to improve this result (Mangoma, 2023).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) addressed the challenges by releasing Memorandum No. 3 in 2007, which aimed to enhance the performance of BSA graduates in the CPALE by introducing revised policies and standards for the undergraduate program. It set criteria for the gradual phase-out and closure of accountancy programs in schools with consistently poor performance by graduates in ten CPALE takes within five years (Castillo, 2017). Subsequently, CHED Memorandum Order No. 17, series of 2017, encouraged HEIs only to admit students with a high probability of success in the accountancy program and maintain satisfactory academic performance (Castillo, 2017).

Accordingly, Cammayo and Gonzales (2022) stated that one of the universities' most common retention policies to measure student learning performance and program quality is the Qualifying Examination (QE), also known as the battery examination.

The administration of the QE is an evaluative process closely mirroring the format and possible contents of actual board examinations, integral to each academic year which is essential before a student can progress to the subsequent academic level

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(Perez, 2015). Moreover, Salcedo et al. (2021) underscore the notion that this assessment is a reliable measure for evaluating the performance of accountancy students, especially in preparation for the CPALE. The inference drawn from their findings supports the assertion that the effectiveness of these QEs can be seen through the subsequent results of the CPALE, thereby establishing a clear correlation between QE and the national licensure board examination performance.

However, it is worth noting that the outcomes of the CPALE vary among universities as retention policies, specifically QE, are implemented in variations per university.

The effective use of QEs is not only a strategy for student readiness but also serves as a marker of the program's quality, verified by the tangible results seen in CPALE performances. While it is unlikely that an adequate measure of the quality of accountancy education is by the graduates' success in the CPALE, many believe that it is a good approximation. (Castillo, 2017).

If the measurement of the quality of an institution's accountancy program and its students is based on the CPALE results, a study conducted by Calubayan (2020) stated that some repeaters and passers of the national examination were in agreement that the implemented retention policy in the program does not help in increasing the passing percentage of the understudy university. Moreover, supported by the study of Castillo (2017), the various retention policies under the accountancy program do not effectively achieve their intended purpose. The results showed that the performance of subject-accountancy schools in the CPALE had been continuously declining in the past five years.

From this viewpoint, QE as a widely adopted retention policy across universities, generally falls short of fulfilling its intended purpose: to increase students' chances of achieving high pass rates in the CPALE. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that intensifying the selection process through QE to enhance and ensure the quality of individuals admitted to the program may not necessarily lead to a proportional increase in pass rates for the CPALE, as suggested by the studies above. Instead, such an approach could only significantly impact graduation rates and the number of prospective board examinees.

In the study of Camayo and Gonzales (2022), QE serves as the primary reason why students are not retained in the BSA, thereby contributing to the low supply of accountants in the Philippines. Therefore, QE often goes unnoticed in acting as a stumbling block for most students, disqualifying them at various stages of their academic journey within the BSA program, in turn, exerting significant downward pressure on the program's graduation rates, resulting in only a fraction of the initially enrolled BSA students completing the program.

All the cited existing body of research predominantly focuses on analyzing the performance of specific educational institutions in the CPALE. It delves into the correlation of the QE, as a retention policy, on passing rates. However, a noticeable knowledge gap exists in exploring how disqualification from the QE might deter aspiring students from pursuing the accountancy profession, potentially leading to a reduced supply of accountants nationwide.

The study focuses on former BSA students who initially enrolled in the academic year 2020-2021 of the understudy State University but did not successfully pass the QE of its BSA program, which disqualified them from progressing within the said program of the university.

Traditionally, the State University administers QE to its BSA students at every year level, beginning in their first year. The established rules and guidelines governing the examination during their first QE maintained a passing rate requirement of 60% overall, with the added condition that students must achieve scores of at least 60% in each subject to pass successfully. However, in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the QE was rescheduled for the focus group of this research, commencing in their second year. The passing rate was adjusted to 50% when students reached their second QE. Those not meeting the standards were forced to shift to other programs or universities.

According to the official records, from the 700 students who were initially enrolled in the accountancy program of the main campus as first-year students during the academic year 2020-2021, only 270 took the first examination. With this factor at play, 105 students from this population have progressed to 4th year after the second examination in their third year.

The researchers particularly reevaluate the QE's features and implementation to discover factors that may opt to deter disqualified students in pursuing the BSA program. This may serve as a reference for other universities and colleges in enhancing their BSA program retention policy to identify other possible methods and designs for striking a balance between passing rates and higher graduation rates while maintaining the competency of potential accountants and, in turn, simultaneously increasing the number of accountants in the country.

#### *A. Research Questions*

1. What are the demographic characteristics of participants?
2. What was the participants' knowledge regarding the Qualifying Examination policy?
3. How did participants experience the Qualifying Examination?
4. How does failing the Qualifying Examination potentially impede students from pursuing a BSA program?
5. What potential recommendations or improvements to the BSA program retention policy of the State University could address the challenges identified in the study?
6. What emerging framework may be proposed?

#### *B. Theoretical Framework*

Vincent Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (1993) has significantly contributed to understanding the factors influencing a student's decision to persist in or depart from higher education institutions. The Theory suggests that student success and retention are not solely dependent on individual characteristics but are heavily influenced by the social and

academic environments in which students find themselves.

Stages of Retention are highlighted in the Theory. The first stage refers to the *Recruitment and Admission to College*, wherein the institution must set realistic expectations so prospective students can choose the appropriate school. Then, it leads to the second stage, *Orientation: Bridging the Gap to College*, providing new students with information about the character of institutional life and the requirements of the academic system they are entering. *Pre-entry Assessment and Placement: Identifying Student Needs* is the third stage, which places students in appropriate first-year courses and assesses them for counseling and advising purposes. The last stage is the *First Year: Making the Transition to College*, an institution's initiative to help students make a social and academic transition to the college's new and possibly much more challenging life with things such as a first-year experience course.

In this research, Tinto's Theory will be utilized to investigate the factors influencing student persistence within the BSA program at the State University. By examining academic integration, social integration, and institutional commitment within this specific program, this study aims to identify whether the current program policy of BSA, specifically the QE, impacts student retention and, consequently and potentially, the supply of accountants.

## 2. Methods

This section refers to the method and approaches to be used in the study, encompassing detailed vital aspects of the Research Design, Participants, Data Collection and Data Analysis procedures, and the Ethical Considerations that underpin the study.

### A. Research Approach

By choosing Phenomenological Methodology, the researchers sought to comprehend the lived experiences of individuals, who faced disqualification due to the QE, within the BSA program of the State University. This approach allowed for uncovering the essence of students' experiences with the QE and the subsequent disqualification protocol, providing a rich and in-depth understanding of the factors at play. Moreover, the researchers intended to explore whether these experiences influence students' decisions to pursue the accountancy program. By capturing the essence of participants' experiences, this approach enabled the generation of meaningful recommendations for policy improvement. This study also contributed to a more informed and targeted approach to addressing the challenges faced by the BSA program and, by extension, the broader landscape of accountancy education in the country.

### B. Data Collection

#### 1) Phase 1

Researchers randomly selected samples from the disqualified students of the population in conducting the study. Consent in conducting the study was sought by the researchers from the participants.

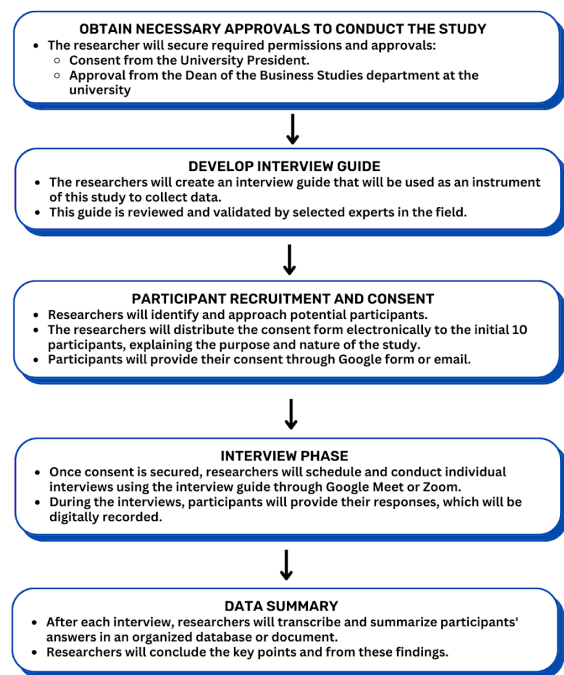


Fig. 1. Illustration of the data collection process to be used in the study

#### 2) Phase 2

Data were gathered through online interviews and were all recorded for transcriptions later on. The researchers used a Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) to collect necessary information for the pursuance of the study. The SSI technique aims to elicit information from one participant at a time in a conversational approach. To achieve this, the interviewer employs a combination of closed- and open-ended questions, with the latter often accompanied by follow-up why or how queries (Jamshed, 2014).

The interview questions are listed below:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of participants in terms of
  - a. Academic achievements in the program before disqualification;
  - b. The academic year the participants were disqualified; and
  - c. Whether the participants opted to continue with the BSA program or ceased their pursuit of it after disqualification.
2. What was the participants' knowledge regarding the Qualifying Examination policy?
  - a. What were the participants' prior knowledge about the Qualifying Examinations in the BSA program before enrolling?
  - b. Upon admission to the program, were the participants oriented about the Qualifying Examination, a retention policy, implemented by the University in its BSA program?
  - c. What did the participants know about the Qualifying Examination's rules and guidelines before taking it? Was it adequately explained by the University?

3. How did participants experience the Qualifying Examination?
  - a. What are the experiences or observations of the participants on how the Qualifying Examination impacted their academic performance, both pre and post-examination? Did it enhance their understanding of the program?
  - b. Do participants recognize that the Qualifying Examination is serving its purpose in ensuring and increasing the quality of accountancy students from the University?
4. How does failing the Qualifying Examination potentially impede students from pursuing a BSA program?
  - a. What specific challenges or obstacles did participants face after the disqualification?
  - b. What influencing factors did participants consider regarding their BSA program continuity or discontinuity?
5. What potential recommendations or improvements to the BSA program retention policy of the State University could address the challenges identified in the study?
  - a. Drawing from your experiences and insights, do you have any recommendations to improve the current Qualifying Examination policy of the University? If yes, what are these?
  - b. Aside from the Qualifying Examination, what other methods do you think the University may consider in choosing the qualified students to continue the BSA program?

3) Phase 3

Thematic analysis was used to summarize findings from the interviews, and carefully reviewed each response, highlighting key concepts, themes, or patterns. Emphasis was placed on identifying recurring themes, unique perspectives, and any

unexpected findings. Subsequently, these identified concepts were grouped based on similarities or interconnectedness to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the data.

**3. Results, Findings, and Discussion**

This study collected data through Google Meet interviews conducted in December 2023, involving a total of 10 participants. Among them, five participants were from the State University’s BSAIS, and the remaining five were from other universities and colleges, all of whom were disqualified due to the QE in the BSA program. Despite the relatively small sample size, saturation was achieved with the questions posed to the 10 participants, ensuring comprehensive insights for this study.

*A. Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

This study reveals a significant number of high-achieving students disqualified from the BSA program at the State University. Out of 270 participants, 268 achieved President's or Dean's List recognition, showcasing consistent academic excellence. Despite this, nine participants failed to progress after two QEs and only one faced disqualification during the 1st QE in the third academic year. Half of the disqualified participants transferred to other institutions, mainly opting for the same program, the BSA. Participants staying at the State University shifted to its Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information Systems (BSAIS) program. Transfer experiences varied both those went to BSAIS of the State University or BSA of another institution, impacting graduation timelines. BSAIS transferees mandated summer classes for timely graduation, while transferees to BSA of other institutions were required to take up additional coursework due to the misalignment of the curriculum of the State University and the other institutions’ BSA program. Both of these transfers resulted in additional costs for disqualified students. However, notably, these students were provided almost the same graduation timeline as those who were qualified from the State University’s QE. This

Table 1  
Number of participants in the study

Participants	Description	Sample Number
A	Former BSA students of DHVSU who were initially enrolled in the program in the academic year 2020-2021 but were disqualified from the program due to the program’s Qualifying Examination. Participants must also be on the dean’s or president’s list, at least once, during the year/s the participants belonged to the BSA program of DHVSU. In the Academic Year 2023-2024, the participants are enrolled in DHVSU under any of its college programs.	5
B	Former BSA students of DHVSU who were initially enrolled in the program in the academic year 2020-2021 but were disqualified from the program due to the program’s Qualifying Examination. Participants must also be on the dean’s or president’s list, at least once, during the year/s the participants belonged to the BSA program of DHVSU. Currently, in the Academic Year 2023-2024, the participants are enrolled in any university or college outside DHVSU but within Pampanga.	5
	TOTAL	10

Table 2  
Demographic characteristics of the participants

Demographic Characteristics	Codes	Participants	Frequency of Responses
Pre-Disqualification Academic Performance: DL/PL Status Frequency	4 semesters	1,3,5,8,9	5
	2 semesters	6,7,10	3
	5 semesters	2	1
	3 semesters	4	1
Disqualification Year Level	Incoming 4th Academic Year	1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	9
	Incoming 3rd Academic Year	3	1
Program Pursuit Following Disqualification	Pursuit of BSA Program in Alternative Institutions	1,5,8,9,10	5
	Discontinuation of BSA Program Pursuit	3,4	2
	Deferred Pursuit of BSA Program	2,6,7	3

raises questions about the rationale behind disqualifying them, especially if participants are proven to be eligible for graduation from the same program and at the same time as those who were qualified. The disqualification, in turn, could only potentially lead to a discontinuation of the BSA program pursuit or a delay in the supply of accountants.

*B. Knowledge of the Participants Regarding the QE as a Retention Policy*

Participants' prior knowledge of the BSA program before enrollment mainly centers on key concepts such as selection parameters, including automatic disqualification and the quota policy, alongside differing perceptions of evaluation frequency. Participants had varying levels of understanding regarding these key themes. Additionally, four participants had similar information about the impact of the QE on low graduation rates. This knowledge, whether differing or similar, primarily stems from external sources rather than the State University policy documents.

Upon admission, the State University BSA program did not conduct a formal orientation on QE features and implementations, possibly due to oversight factors regarding its necessity. Consequently, participants, particularly within the first two years before their first QE, encountered

communication discrepancies, raising concerns about access to credible information. The pandemic and an assumption of student familiarity with the QE policy in the program further contributed to the absence of an orientation session. This hindered understanding of program policies and raised concerns about support for students transitioning into the BSA program.

Furthermore, Participants found the QE announcement in the BSA program lacking clarity. Despite its interactive nature, participants received only partial guidelines, some already known, such as cheating rules and required subjects. Concerns were also raised about inconsistencies in passing rates and quotas information due to subsequent changes of policy after examination, the lack of a TOS for assessment validity, and unequal lesson scopes among students with different professors. Disorganized schedules also caused anxiety and insufficient preparation time for participants, especially as the QE is usually announced shortly after final exams.

*C. Participants' QE Experiences and Views on Purpose Fulfillment*

The QE enhances understanding of the BSA program by fostering study habits influenced by psychological and emotional factors. Participants faced stress and anxiety during the pre-examination phase, grappling with extensive QE

Table 3  
Participants' QE knowledge at pre-enrollment, admission, and announcement

Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency of Responses
<i>Key Policy Concepts</i>	Selection Parameters	1,2,4,5,6,9,10	7
	Low Graduation Rate	1,2,4,8,9,10	6
	Evaluation Frequency	1,2,4,6,	4
<i>Admission Oversight Factors</i>	Information Sourcing Diversions	1,2,3,7,8,9,10	7
	QE Procedure Uncertainty	1,2,3,4	4
	Pandemic Admissions	1,3	2
	Assumed QE Awareness	4	1
<i>Organizational Deficiencies</i>	Partial Guidelines	1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10	9
	No TOS	2,4,8	3
	Schedule Disorganization	2,3,4	3

Table 4  
Participants' QE experiences and views on purpose fulfillment

Theme	Codes	Participants	Frequency of Responses
Pre-Examination Impact	Emotional and Psychological Factors	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10	9
	Intensified learning	1,5,7,9	4
	Productivity Enhancement	6	1
	Program Selection Reflection	4	1
Post-Examination Impact	Emotional and Psychological Factors	3,4,5,6,8,9,10	7
	Identified study gaps	2,6,7,9	4
	Study habit regression	8	1
	Relief from Disqualification	1	1
QE Purpose Fulfillment Feedback	Predictive Bias	1,2,3,4,5,6,8	7
	Assessment of Competence	1,6,7,8,10	5
	Learning drive	1,9	2
	Policy inconsistency	1,4	2

Table 5  
Post-Disqualification challenges and influencing factors in program continuity

Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency of Responses
<i>Intrinsic Challenges</i>	Emotional Struggle	2,3,5,6,7,9,10	7
	Career Reflection	2,4,7	3
<i>Extrinsic Challenges</i>	Transfer Support	1,7,8,10	4
	Curriculum Misalignment	1,4	2
<i>Influencing Factors</i>	Timely Completion	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10	8
	Financial Considerations	1,2,3,4,7,9,10	7
	Social Influences	1,7,8,9	4
	Career-related Factors	3,4,5,6	4

Table 6  
Recommendations for DHVSU's QE policy system refinements of participants

Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency of Responses
<i>Current Policy Refinement</i>	Policy Consistency and Transparency	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	9
	Allowance for Retakes	2,4,5,8,9,10	6
	Comprehensive Orientations	4,7,8,9	4
	Pre-Examination Necessities	3,4,6,8	4
<i>Extended Retention Policy</i>	Grade Retention Policy	2,5,6,8,9,10	6
	Extracurricular Engagement	3,4	2
	Probationary Status	6	1

coverage. Despite challenges, this period cultivated effective study habits and renewed enthusiasm for learning for some participants. While most made progress in grasping concepts and managing time efficiently, some struggled to establish consistent study routines due to momentary anxiety affecting their confidence.

After the examination, emotional and psychological factors still notably affected academic performance, with seven participants experiencing pressure, burnout, frustration, disappointment, or self-doubt. One participant mentioned that their study habits stopped since they were initially created out of anxiousness. In contrast, one participant found relief and increased motivation to study more upon disqualification due to a less pressured environment. Four disqualified participants realized program understanding gaps and deficiencies, suggesting regret and a learned lesson.

Overall, support for the QE's role in improving student quality is endorsed, but reservations remain, particularly criticizing its predictive bias and do-or-die nature for closing opportunities for late bloomers. Seven participants argue that the undergraduate program should improve students and consider circumstances beyond students' shortcomings. Issues of policy inconsistencies were also raised, such as questioning the exam's reliability and validity due to changes in passing percentage adjustments based on overall performance, and lack of disclosure thereof. On a positive note, participants recognize QE's ability to assess competence and contribute to a learning drive among students. Hence, QE is deemed to be necessary for the BSA program to measure competence, but participants suggest that it does not cater to students' needs to succeed in the program, indicating the need for reevaluation of its features and implementation.

*D. Post-Disqualification Challenges and Influencing Factors in Program Continuity*

Nine participants experienced emotional struggles, including self-disappointment, self-doubt, embarrassment, and peer pressure from successful peers after disqualification. Their responses varied from disappointment over wasted time in the BSA program to questioning their suitability for the profession. Disqualification also led three participants to deeply reflect on their career path, with some initially considering leaving the BSA program after disqualification.

Deficiencies of the State University's support during students' transition also left four participants feeling ill-prepared and uncertain about post-disqualification options. The lack of information about alternative options prompted some participants to rush their decision and choose to transfer to BSAIS, which has fewer transfer procedures since it is in the

same State University. Curriculum misalignment further complicated the transfer process, particularly the discrepancies in units offered between the State University's BSA program and other institutions. This posed major concerns for the State University's ability to provide transfer easement from its BSA program to other institutions' BSA programs.

Notably, half of the participants did not continue the BSA program. The majority of participants prioritized timely graduation and financial considerations when deciding whether to continue or discontinue their pursuit of the program. Notably, most of the institutions accepting BSA transferees on their premises are private schools. Hence, high transfer costs and prolonged education were significant factors for those who opted to transfer to BSAIS instead of continuing in other institutions for the BSA program. Others who continued the BSA program in another institution also considered financial matters but chose to continue due to their availability of means, career choice, and the importance of timely graduation as a BSA student. Family and peer support also provided emotional encouragement and guidance, while career aspirations also influenced decisions, reflecting a balanced consideration of prospects and personal interests.

*E. Potential Improvements to the BSA Program Retention Policy*

Identified weaknesses within the policy suggest a refinement of the current retention policy, focusing on Policy Consistency and Transparency, Allowance for Retakes, Comprehensive Orientations, and Pre-Examination Necessities. Additionally, while the QE remains the primary retention policy, participants suggested alternative strategies, including the Grade Retention Policy, Extracurricular Engagement, and Probationary Status. These retention policies are commonly utilized by universities and colleges in the Philippines to support student success in the BSA program.

Nine participants emphasized the importance of policy consistency and transparency in ensuring fairness. These participants advocate for clear and unwavering rules to avoid subjective changes that could unfairly impact exam results. Suggestions for enhancing transparency include using private emails for communicating outcomes and codenames for posting results publicly. Additionally, six participants propose allowing retakes in line with CPALE guidelines to promote inclusivity and eliminate predictive bias. Comprehensive orientations and pre-exam necessities are also deemed important to reduce disqualification rates and ensure adequate student readiness, as suggested by multiple participants.

Other methods that may be implemented by the State University aside from QE encompass grade retention,



extracurricular involvement, and probationary measures, emphasizing the importance of considering overall academic performance. Participants propose using grade retention as a criterion for conditional QE participation, suggesting the enrichment of skills through co-curricular activities and alternative assessment methods like practical application of knowledge. The probationary status mirrors retention policies observed at other institutions, providing consideration for students who fail the QE but exhibit good academic performance.

**F. Student-Centric Retention Policy Framework**

Based on these findings and discussions, the development of a Student-Centric Retention Policy Framework was created. This framework aims to enhance student retention and success by incorporating various elements such as grade retention, probationary periods, and support mechanisms. Visualizing these components through a mind map can provide State University’s policymakers with a clearer understanding of how they interact to achieve the overarching goal of improving student outcomes. By prioritizing the needs and experiences of students, this framework represents a shift towards policies that promote student success and well-being, fostering a more supportive and inclusive academic environment. Ultimately, implementing such a framework not only has the potential to increase BSA graduation rates but also ensures the quality of students through a holistic approach.

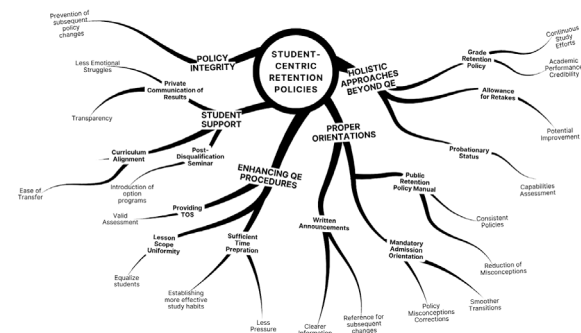


Fig. 2. Student-Centric retention policies framework

**1) Holistic Approaches beyond QE**

- a) Grade Retention Policy encourages students to engage in continuous study efforts before the QE. This not only encourages student engagement but also enables the administration to recognize grades as evidence of students' competencies, reinforcing the university's commitment to education quality, ensuring grade credibility, and embracing a holistic assessment approach beyond QE performance.
- b) The "do-or-die" nature of QE should be limited to the initial three years of a student's academic tenure. Given the broader coverage and information in the incoming 4th-year examination, students should be permitted a retake for the final QE in the fourth year. This modification provides additional opportunities for students to improve their knowledge and skills before facing potential removal from the program.
- c) Adoption of a probationary policy is also a student-centric

policy wherein students who do meet the grade retention policy but are disqualified for the 3rd year of QE would be placed on probation, with considerations of their performance in the previous two academic years subject to certain conditions such as attending to review or make-up classes for the subjects failed to remain in the program. The results of this probationary period would help the students assess their capabilities to understand the failed subjects as well as for the college to evaluate whether the student is suited for the program.

**2) Proper Orientations**

- a) Comprehensive and publicly available retention policy manual, outlining its features, ensures that students considering enrollment are well-informed, establishing clear expectations and maintaining consistent policies, reducing the likelihood of misinformation.
- b) Initial orientation upon admission must be mandatory for freshmen to facilitate a smoother transition from high school to college. This orientation should outline the timeline, frequency, and content of the QE, helping students better prepare. It should also address any misconceptions or discrepancies regarding key policies from the manual. Additionally, information about the repercussions of disqualification and the best options for disqualified students for academic trajectories should be disseminated during this orientation to aid in understanding their next steps.
- c) Announcements of all necessary QE rules and guidelines, including any unique to specific batches due to changes from the manual or initial orientation, must be properly disseminated. Distributing written information among students would facilitate sufficient dissemination and provide a reference before and after QE results. This approach promotes clarity and consistency in understanding QE procedures, benefiting all parties involved.

**3) Enhancing QE Procedures**

- a) The announcement date of QE should be properly scheduled to ensure ample lead time for student preparation, ideally not be made after the final examination of the second semester of the academic year. Early announcement of the QE date may lessen the pressure experienced by the students, recognizing that not all students thrive in high-pressure environments. Providing ample amount of time for them to prepare may improve their study habits without compromising the quality of students.
- b) Uniform lesson scopes throughout the academic year must be ensured to equalize student knowledge for QE commencement. The college must ensure that professors provide discussions of the entire scope given.
- c) TOS must be provided to the students upon announcement of QE to have a valid assessment of competencies. This also aligns with the CPALE format.

**4) Student Support**

- a) Private communication of results to students, including subject percentages and overall performance, may lessen peer pressure and other emotional struggles that may be encountered if publicly announced. This information also allows students to verify the validity of results against announced rules and any subsequent changes in passing percentages.

b) The current curriculum must be aligned with other institutions to facilitate easier transfer for disqualified students, avoiding higher costs and unnecessary degree completion extensions.

c) A seminar post-disqualification to introduce BSAIS as an alternative program provides students with an overview of the option program, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding their career trajectory.

#### 5) *Policy Integrity*

a) Preventing subsequent policy changes following poor student performance maintains the results' credibility and consistency with announcements. Any necessary adjustments, especially passing percentages, should be publicly disclosed to students for result transparency.

### 4. Conclusion

The following were the conclusions of the study:

1. The demographic profiles of participants highlight the challenging nature of the QE, where academic achievement does not ensure success. This is particularly evident in the incoming 4th-year QE, which is notably more extensive than the 3rd-year exam. Participants also face a similar graduation timeline whether disqualified participants continue the BSA program elsewhere or opt for BSAIS.
2. Enrollment in the BSA program presupposes some prior knowledge about the QE, but its extent and accuracy vary among students, depending on their information sources. The lack of publicly available documents regarding the State University's QE policy results in disparities in students' perceptions of key concepts. The absence of formal orientation worsens this issue, as students rely on different sources, creating unequal access to credible information and potential under-preparedness. This is especially concerning for freshmen, compounded by factors like the pandemic, which exacerbates communication challenges and navigating a new college environment. Uncertainty about QE procedures persists, with misconceptions not immediately corrected. Therefore, timely and comprehensive orientations and subsequent announcements of the QE are crucial to avoid inconsistency of facts, confusion, and anxiety, hindering students' performance and preparation. When announcements are rushed and inadequate, failure to offer sufficient time for proper preparation happens, which increases the risk of disqualification.
3. The QE enhances students' understanding of the program because of the heightened psychological and emotional factors, primarily induced by the do-or-die nature of the examination. The pressure to study and pass the exam is implicitly conveyed to students, but the lack of preparation for the QE is rooted in the university's inadequate announcements and time allocation, attributed to its extensive coverage without specified details. Addressing this time constraint requires improved time management strategies. The dedication put into establishing study commitments and subsequently gaining confidence that one will pass the QE during the pre-examination phase can carry profound psychological and emotional implications if a student faces disqualification. This outcome may result in feelings of self-disappointment, self-doubt, burnout, frustration, and future pressure. Thus, despite the evident increase in study commitments, the QE's efficacy in achieving its primary objectives of improving the quality of BSA students and evaluating their competence comes into question. Ineffectively implemented QE procedures, characterized by delayed announcements and insufficient information dissemination, hinder its ability to definitively identify suitable candidates for the program. This situation raises apprehensions regarding predictive bias since a single examination instance may not adequately reflect a student's overall competence and potential. The conclusions drawn from this observation suggest potential inequality for late bloomers in the program, who might benefit from the university providing another opportunity for improvement.
4. After disqualification from the BSA program, many individuals still aspire to continue the BSA program but encounter challenges that often lead to considering other factors such as timely completion of their degree and the financial implications of transferring either to the BSAIS program or to other institutions offering BSA programs. While social influences are deemed to offer some support, uncontrollable factors such as the aforementioned remain significant challenges for most students. Therefore, for those lacking financial resources, the choice of the BSA program becomes limited, especially as private schools are typically the only ones accepting transfer students disqualified due to QE. The lack of support from the university exacerbates the situation. Without proper guidance or orientation regarding their options, students are left confused and may hastily choose a career path. This confusion is compounded by curriculum misalignments between the BSA program and those of other institutions, necessitating additional courses and expenses for transfer students. This discrepancy may suggest that the BSA program is not transfer-friendly, particularly for underprivileged students who may struggle to afford the extra costs associated with continuing their BSA studies as well as being left behind after disqualification. These factors weigh heavily on their decision-making process, making it difficult for them to pursue their BSA dreams.
5. While there is no intention to eliminate the QE in the BSA program, the disqualification of individuals has prompted a recognition of the need for a reevaluation of the retention policy. This reassessment is crucial for ensuring fairness and inclusivity, addressing the identified weaknesses highlighted in this study. The proposed comprehensive refinement, with a focus on



Policy Consistency and Transparency, Allowance for Retakes, Comprehensive Orientations, and Pre-Examination Necessities, aims to elevate the quality of BSA students and the overall program. Importantly, these adjustments seek improvement without impeding the supply of accountants. Moreover, alternative strategies, such as the Grade Retention Policy, Extracurricular Engagement, and Probationary Status, are under consideration to enhance student support and retention within the program, emphasizing a more student-centric approach.

6. The Student-Centric Retention Policies framework was developed in conducting this study.

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