

A Qualitative Study on Challenges and Institutional Impact in Enhancing Criminology Licensure Examination Success Through Strengthened Review Program Initiatives

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Publication Date: May 2, 2026

DOI: **10.5281/zenodo.19954265**

Abstract

Criminology deals at criminal activity in society and seeks to figure out why people commit crimes. Since the founding of the first criminology programs in the Philippines, criminology education has expanded dramatically, and graduates' performance on the Criminology Licensure Examination has proven to be a crucial indicator of both academic quality and institutional efficacy. In order to improve licensure exam performance at the University of Cagayan Valley, this study evaluated the institutional impact and challenges of strengthening review program activities. In particular, it looked at the challenges faced by criminology graduates in their training, analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of current review programs, and determined the administrative, budgetary, and logistical needs required to improve these programs. To describe experiences of stakeholders, a qualitative case study method was employed. University administrators, a representative of a review provider, and forty-seven (47) purposely selected participants participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, which was then examined to find recurring themes. The results showed that during their preparation, both passers and non-passers faced financial, personal, and academic difficulties. Passers, on the other hand, demonstrated more effective study techniques, resiliency, and utilization of the existing support networks. The study emphasizes that in addition to individual effort, successful institutional support, organized review programs, and dedicated faculty mentoring are also necessary for passing the licensing exam.

Keywords: criminology licensure examination, review programs, board exam preparation, criminology education, academic support, graduate performance



I. INTRODUCTION

The scientific study of criminal behavior, both in society and among individuals, is known as criminology. It is separated into a number of distinct fields, such as biology, economics, political science, psychology, natural science, and human evolution and development. The question of why someone would break the law or commit a crime is the responsibility of criminologists. This started in Europe in the late 1700s and early 1800s, and in the Philippines, the first school to offer a criminology course was the Philippine College of Criminology, formerly Plaridel College. In the 1950s, this institution was founded for scientific crime detection throughout the entire country and Southeast Asia due to the influence of foreign scholars and rising crime rates. Almost every college and university in the nation offered criminology courses in the early 1960s. To be recognized as a Licensed Criminologist and have full authorization to practice the field, a criminology graduate with a baccalaureate degree must pass the Professional Regulation Commission of the Philippines' Licensure Examination. RA 11131, also known as "The Philippine Criminology Profession Act of 2018," which repealed RA 6506, also known as "An Act Creating the Board of Examiners for Criminologists in the Philippines and for Other Purposes," mandates this. Through sacred, honest, effective, and credible licensure exams as well as programs and activities that would promote professional growth and development, the board seeks to develop competent, moral, productive, and well-rounded criminologists whose standards of professional practice and service shall be excellent, qualitative, excellent, and globally competitive (sec.2 RA11131).

Alongside, the review center aims to assist students in reviewing or renewing their knowledge in a specific area of expertise. The purpose of these workshops is to help students prepare for their upcoming board examination. According to the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), passing a board examination certifies an individual as a respected professional with integrity, moral values, and the capacity to compete on a global scale.

In the Philippines, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are evaluated using a variety of methods. One of the biggest achievements in a college graduate's life is probably passing the Professional Regulation Commission's (PRC) licensure tests (Baang, 2016). The test's goal is to evaluate graduates' qualifications, knowledge, development, and skills in a specific profession.

Additionally, the level of education the institution provides is determined by the graduates' success on these licensing examinations, guaranteeing the efficacy and efficiency of its graduates' educational application in their professional employment.

Along the above context, University of Cagayan Valley (UCV), a prestigious learning institution situated at Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, Philippines, is committed to fostering socioeconomic development in the region and educating minds. With a broad selection of undergraduate and graduate programs in many different fields, UCV has developed from its modest origins into a thriving hub for academic success. As a cornerstone of UCV, the prestigious College of Criminal Justice Education is home to 6,600 varied students, accounting for an impressive 41% of the university's overall enrollment for the 2023–2024 academic year. Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Bachelor of Science in Criminology (ETEEAP), Master of Science in Criminology, and Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice with a Specialization in Criminology are the four programs that the college provides. The PACUCOA has granted Level III accreditation to the college. Its dedication to providing top-notch criminal justice education is reinforced by demanding coursework and practical training programs. Bachelor of Science in Criminology (BSCrim) is a degree that typically takes four years to complete. The Board



Examination is given twice a year, in August and February. Criminology and jurisprudence, law enforcement administration, forensic science, crime detection and investigation, criminology, and correctional administration are the primary topics that are covered in the board examination. The Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) found that the institution's performance in the licensure examinations from December 2021 to February 2025 varied depending on the testing period. The national passing rate was 34.16% in December 2021, while the total performance was 30.63%. Overall performance fell to 25.36% by June 2022, falling short of the 30.30% national passing rate. Performance reached 35.71% in December 2022, above the national passing average of 33.14%. The entire performance, however, fell to 19.31% in April 2023, well below the national passing percentage of 31.84%. Although there was a discernible improvement, the total performance in February 2024 was still below the national passing percentage of 48.27% at 37.81%. Moreover, the August 2023 examination's overall score of 18.53% fell short of the 32.68% national passing rate once more. Overall performance improved to 41.00% in July 2024, however the national passing percentage was 49.34% at that time. The institution's performance throughout this time was below average, reaching a peak in February 2025 at 47.62%. Implementing on-campus review programs is one tactic that colleges are using more and more to deal with these issues.

Republic Act No. 10609, "An Act Protecting the Right of Students Enrolled in Courses Requiring Professional Licensing Examinations to Enroll in Review Centers of Their Choice and Providing Penalties for Violations Thereof," upholds the State's obligation to safeguard students' freedom to select their review centers without coercion or imposition by HEIs by guaranteeing that students remain at the center of their preparation for licensing exams. To support this legislative framework, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) released CMO No. 5, Series of 2018. It outlines the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program's Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs). With regard to curriculum design, faculty qualifications, facilities, and instruction based on results, this order guarantees that criminology programs across the country adhere to strict quality requirements. The criminology curriculum is precisely aligned with the subjects of the license exam, increasing students' readiness and prospects of success in the job. Given the aforementioned findings, the researcher made the decision to conduct this study in order to assess the barriers and institutional impact for enhancing criminology licensure test performance at the University of Cagayan Valley through improved review program initiatives.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the challenges and institutional impact in enhancing criminology licensure examination success through strengthened review program initiatives at the University of Cagayan Valley.

Specifically, it described the following:

1. Challenges faced by Criminology graduates in preparing for the licensure examination;
2. Strengths, limitations and complementary roles of the institutional review program initiatives in shaping graduates' preparedness for the board examination;
3. Logistical, financial, and administrative requirements for enhancing the institutional review programs initiatives.



II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative research design utilizing a case study was implored in this investigation. According to Coombs (2022), a case study is a methodological research approach intended to offer a thorough comprehension of a current problem or phenomenon within a specific context. It entailed a careful examination of a person, organization, or occasion in order to investigate actual situations and produce insightful findings. The case study approach, one of the most popular qualitative research techniques in the social sciences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2022), was especially useful as a more thorough understanding of a particular problem, event, or phenomenon in its actual, natural environment was required (Crowe et al., 2011). Additionally, it was regarded as a suitable research approach for answering the "how," "why," and "what" questions (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2018).

Participants of the Study

Traditional qualitative research frequently uses fixed numerical thresholds, typically recommending sample sizes of 5 to 30 participants per group (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). However, the depth and complexity needed for qualitative research, particularly when examining complex experiences within diverse populations, may be missed by such arbitrary thresholds. According to predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of forty-seven (47) purposively selected participants were included in this study.

Data Gathering Tool

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide and evaluated its content validity in order to gather comprehensive qualitative data. As stated by Cohen et al. (2007), content analysis is the process of classifying verbal or behavioral data for classification, summarization, and tabulation.

The instrument was validated by three content matter experts. The guide's open-ended questions were designed to ascertain the difficulties that graduates in the field of criminology encountered while preparing for the licensure examination and to investigate the ways in which institutional review program initiatives impacted the results of board examinations.

Data Analysis

The fundamental ideas of thematic analysis, which are similar to those of other qualitative techniques like discourse analysis, include data coding, theme identification, theme refinement, and presentation of findings (Flick, 2022). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that focuses on finding and characterizing patterns in a dataset; these patterns are then interpreted to reveal their underlying meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Liebenberg et al., 2020; Xu & Zammit, 2020).

Ethical And Legal Considerations

This study was dedicated to conducting the investigation in accordance with ethical standards. Interviews were conducted without coercion, and all information was obtained with the participants' consent. Every piece of information gathered from the participants was kept completely private. The researcher also respects the privacy of the participants. There was no requirement for participants to take part in the study. In addition, the researcher confirmed that



the publication, methods, procedures, data, and results were all fairly reported and free of falsification or manipulation. The researcher also expects research to be impartial and free from bias.

III. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

1. To describe the experiences faced by Criminology graduates in preparing for the licensure examination.

- The findings demonstrated that "passer" and "non-passer" participants had both similar and different experiences preparing for the board examination. Personal and academic issues emerged as emergent themes among passers, indicating that while successfully passing, individuals faced a variety of challenges during their preparation. They also discovered logistical and program limitations, implying that key structural parts of review programs were restricted. Passers, on the other hand, were able to use effective academic and support strategies to aid in their overall exam preparation, allowing them to manage difficulties and perform satisfactorily.

- Non-passers, on the other hand, cited more significant difficulties to their performance. These included difficulties with sophisticated subject mastery, as well as stress and motivational issues. Many encountered competing life obligations and socioeconomic restraints, limiting their ability to completely concentrate on their review. They also reported their diverse experiences with review programs, which included disruptions in the learning environment, poor academic assistance, and limited access to critical materials. These issues underscore the importance of more comprehensive and integrated academic and personal support systems.

2. To explore the strengths, limitations and complementary roles of institutional review program initiatives in shaping graduates' preparedness for the board examination.

- From the viewpoints of both "passer" and "non-passer" participants, the results showed different but connected themes. Supportive teaching and conceptual clarity emerged among the passers, emphasizing the significance of precise education and direction in grasping important topics. Additionally, they noted the limitations and efficacy of review programs, acknowledging that although review initiatives are usually beneficial, some areas still need to be improved. Passers also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of review programs, highlighting areas where programs are successful and where improvements are required, as well as the utilization of complementary review tactics including self-study and peer help.

- Conversely, non-passers identified themes related to the inconsistent quality of education and subject-matter comprehension. Along with disturbances in the learning environment and scheduling problems that adversely affect their preparation, they also identified content-related obstacles that impede effective learning. Additionally, non-passers recognized the benefits and drawbacks of review programs, especially with regard to delivery and accessibility, which ultimately affect their performance on the board test.

3. To determine the logistical, financial, and administrative requirements for enhancing the institutional review programs initiatives.

- The results identified three major themes: financial planning, logistics, and administrative support that are crucial for improving institutional review program initiatives. Participants emphasized that the successful execution of review activities depends on sound



financial planning, which is defined by sufficient budgeting, appropriate funding allocation, and expense transparency.

- In terms of logistics, it was determined that the availability and appropriate arrangement of resources such as locations, educational materials, technology tools, and schedules were essential to enabling efficient and successful program delivery. The entire learning experience and participant engagement were shown to be greatly enhanced by well-managed logistics.

- Furthermore, it became clear that maintaining program quality required considerable administrative assistance. To guarantee that all program components are methodically handled and continuously enhanced, it was stressed that effective planning, coordination, communication, and policy execution are essential.

IV. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Passing the licensing exam requires more than just intelligence or taking a review course. Every successful examinee has a tale of perseverance, sacrifice, and hard work. Graduates thrive when they are able to manage the realities of everyday life, such as financial worries and personal responsibilities, while simultaneously utilizing the support system that surrounds them, whether it be from their school, instructors, family, or friends. In many respects, passing the board test is a reflection of preparation as well as the type of setting that supports regular, concentrated learning.

Passers and non-passers varied significantly, particularly in how they dealt with their difficulties. Passers were generally able to maintain focus, adjust to obstacles, and make the most of the review programs and resources available to them, despite the stresses and problems faced by both groups. Even in the face of unfavorable circumstances, they managed to continue. However, variable learning environments and personal obligations frequently burden non-passers, making it more difficult for them to focus and take full advantage of academic support. Their experiences demonstrate the profound impact that outside forces can have on performance.

Institutions are also reminded by the study of how important their role is. A learning environment where graduates feel directed and encouraged is created by careful planning, sufficient financing, dedicated instructors, and well-run review systems. Students have a greater opportunity to prepare with clarity and confidence when these mechanisms are robust. It takes more than just one person to pass the licensing exam. It is the result of individual willpower combined with significant institutional support.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forth in light of the summary of findings:

1. The adoption of the suggested action plan and the official establishment and institutionalization of an on-campus review center under the direction of the College of Criminal Justice Education are highly recommended;



2. A capable, devoted, and committed review coordinator with solid academic qualifications, leadership skills, and knowledge of board exams ought to be appointed. The coordinator may be in charge of the review program's design, execution, oversight, and ongoing development;
3. To guarantee policy direction, financial supervision, and interdepartmental cooperation, a Review Center Steering Committee made up of representatives from the Dean's Office, Finance, HR, Registrar, and Quality Assurance should be formed;
4. To acquaint students with structure, tempo, and digital assessment systems, the review provider may use computer-based mock exams that mimic PRC board exam settings;
5. To preserve instructional quality and consistency, qualified instructors with board knowledge should get reasonable compensation and undergo frequent performance reviews;
6. Consistent monitoring of student performance via diagnostic tests, mock board outcomes, and feedback systems ought to direct ongoing program enhancement and tactical modifications;
7. Graduates in criminology may create a planned personal study schedule with weekly goals for each subject area at least three to six months prior to the licensing exam;
8. Instructors should incorporate board-style questions into routine evaluations in the classroom and offer explanations following tests;
9. Review center providers should offer current, Table of Specifications-aligned review materials along with concise justifications;
10. To guarantee interactive learning and student participation, review center providers should maintain reasonable class sizes;
11. In order to identify optimal practices and conduct comparative institutional analysis, future researchers can extend their studies to other institutions.

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