Original Article

The Art of Designing Futures: Academic Performance and Career Readiness of BMMA Graduates

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Abstract. Education plays a vital role in preparing learners to become skilled professionals and globally competitive members of the workforce. Addressing the need to understand how academic performance relates to employability, this study examined the association between academic achievement and work readiness among graduating Bachelor of Multimedia Arts students at a private, deregulated HEI in Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study analyzed the General Weighted Average of 45 student-respondents from Batch 2025 and assessed their perceived readiness to demonstrate competencies aligned with CMO No. 20, s. 2017, alongside the Graduate Attributes, Program Educational Objectives, and Program Learning Outcomes. A researcher-developed, validated, and reliable survey instrument (Cα = 0.98) was used, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a chi-square test. Results revealed that most students achieved academic ratings ranging from "very good" to "superior," and their work readiness was likewise high, with an overall mean of 4.77. However, the chi-square test yielded X² (45, 6) = 8.02, p = 0.237, which is below the critical value, indicating no significant association between academic performance and work readiness. This finding suggests that readiness for employment may depend more on practical experience, exposure to current industry technologies, and the development of soft skills than on academic grades alone. The study highlights the need for the BMMA program to strengthen performance-based and project-based learning, enhance access to industry-aligned tools and facilities, and support faculty development focused on innovative, student-centered instruction. These improvements can help ensure that graduates are not only academically competent but also fully prepared for the demands of the creative industry.

Keywords: Academic performance; BMMA graduates; Private HEI; Work readiness; Bacoor City, Cavite, Philippines.

Education plays a central role in preparing learners to become skilled professionals, multiliterate lifelong learners, and productive members of society (Lansdown, Covell, & Vaghri, 2022; Robinos et al., 2020). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are therefore expected to develop graduates who can think critically, solve problems, and adapt to an increasingly dynamic workforce (Robiños et al., 2024a; Zapanta et al., 2025). As Bouchrika (2025) notes, quality education strengthens not only individual competencies but also the nation's economic competitiveness. Contemporary scholarship likewise emphasizes that education must go beyond

transmitting knowledge; it must cultivate individuals capable of continuous learning and professional growth (Siddique et al., 2022; Robiños et al., 2024b). Transformations in the 21st-century workplace—driven by digital innovation, shifting business models, and global disruptions—have intensified the demand for graduates who are future-ready and highly adaptable (Ancillo et al., 2020). Employers now place greater value on candidates' competencies, soft skills, and readiness to contribute to organizational goals (Oyadiran et al., 2023). For creative and arts-related programs, however, career paths are often complex. Studies show that graduates' long-term career engagement often depends on exposure to diverse creative roles and practical experience, rather than academic preparation alone (Frenette & Dowd, 2020). These patterns highlight the need to evaluate work readiness, particularly in fields where underemployment and career mismatches remain common (Robinos et al., 2023a). Research on work readiness underscores its importance in ensuring that graduates can translate academic learning into meaningful workplace performance (Li et al., 2022; Peersia et al., 2024). Competence must be demonstrated through measurable, transferable skills that can be applied across varied professional scenarios (Tacettin & Mustafa, 2021). However, prior studies indicate that academic achievement is not always a reliable predictor of work readiness, as readiness is influenced by factors such as practical training, technological exposure, psychosocial conditions, and students' career intentions (Kong, 2021; Wu, 2024; Li et al., 2022). This creates an essential tension in higher education: Do strong academic records actually reflect preparedness for work?

This study is conceptually grounded in Dewey's view that meaningful learning arises from purposeful and reflective experiences. From this perspective, work readiness represents the cumulative outcome of academic knowledge and real-world engagement (Kong, 2021; Cloke, 2023). In programs like the Bachelor of Multimedia Arts (BMMA), CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 20, s. 2017 provides clear competency standards that graduates are expected to meet. These standards provide a basis for evaluating whether students are prepared to meet the demands of the creative industries. Despite the growing emphasis on employability, limited research specifically examines whether BMMA students' academic performance aligns with their perceived work readiness, especially within private HEIs in the Philippines. Existing studies often discuss employability in broad terms but do not address potential disconnects between academic indicators and actual readiness for industry practice. This gap is critical given reported issues of skills mismatch and graduate under-preparedness (Bezruchko et al., 2023). Addressing this gap, the present study investigates whether academic performance correlates with the work readiness of graduating BMMA students. Understanding this relationship can inform curriculum refinement, instructional improvement, and faculty development initiatives (Donovan et al., 2022; Rikala et al., 2024; Robinos et al., 2024c). It also supports the institution's goal of producing graduates who are both academically competent and industry-ready.

Methodology

Research Design
A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design was employed in the study. This design was used to interpret the data and draw inferences, particularly to examine the relationship between academic performance and work readiness. As noted by Brodowicz (2024), this design is effective in analyzing the relationship between two or more random variables within the same population or between the same variables in different populations.

Research Locale
The study was conducted at a private, deregulated university in Bacoor, Cavite. The university offers approximately twenty-five programs, including Basic Education, Baccalaureate, Juris Doctor, and TESDA programs. The Bachelor of Multimedia Arts (BMMA) program received government recognition in 2016 and is now celebrating its ninth founding anniversary. The program has been PACUCOA Level III Accredited since 2022, indicating that it has met rigorous standards for instructional quality, faculty competence, research output, and student services.

Research Participants
A total of 45 graduating student-respondents for SY 2024–2025 were selected through total population sampling, ensuring that all eligible individuals from the cohort were included in the study. Participation was voluntary, and students were invited to take part after being informed of the study's purpose and procedures. Only those who agreed to participate and provided informed consent were included. All respondents were officially enrolled graduating students under the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education's Bachelor of Multimedia Arts program for the specified academic year, ensuring that the data reflected the perspectives of students who had completed the whole curriculum and were at the transition point between educational training and entry into the workforce.

Research Instrument
The research employed a researcher-developed survey questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was constructed in alignment with the Program Educational Objectives and Program Learning Outcomes of BMMA, as well as the provisions of CMO No. 20, series of 2017, which outlines the policies, standards, and guidelines for the Bachelor of Multimedia Arts. The survey consisted of three parts: (a) an introduction and ethical considerations with a consent form; (b) academic performance, indicated by the General Weighted Average (GWA) throughout the students' stay in the institution, validated through the university registrar's School Automate System; and (c) the level of work readiness in demonstrating and applying competencies expected from BMMA graduates. The RDC Head validated the research instrument, the Quality Assurance Coordinator, and an external reviewer specializing in MMA-related professional subjects. Moreover, a reliability test was conducted, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.98, indicating high internal consistency, based on a pilot test among 30 graduates from Batches 2023 and 2024.

Data Gathering Procedure
Data collection took place in the BMMA program's iMac laboratory, where respondents were asked to use Apple desktops to complete the Google Forms. The data-gathering procedure was conducted following approval from the RDC Office and the School Director. An on-site orientation was held, and completion of the survey tool was supervised. After data collection, the Google Sheet containing the responses was downloaded and submitted to a statistician for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to address Objectives 1 and 2. Meanwhile, a Chi-square test was employed for Objective 3 because the variables were categorical. Academic performance (e.g., outstanding, very satisfactory, satisfactory) and extent of readiness (e.g., highly ready, moderately ready, fairly ready, not ready) were treated as categorical variables. As Turhan (2020) explains, the Chi-square test is used to assess associations between categorical variables, which are commonly encountered in educational and social science research.

Ethical Consideration
The study rationale and all relevant ethical considerations were thoroughly discussed, including the respondents' right to withdraw at any time, data privacy measures, and the timeline for data disposal.

Results and Discussion
Academic Performance
The results show that most graduates demonstrated strong academic performance, reflecting consistent achievement across both general education and professional multimedia arts subjects. Their grades indicate that they successfully met the academic expectations set by CHED and the institution, including competencies developed in core areas such as visual design, animation, photography, graphics, video production, and media design. This level of performance suggests that students were able to internalize and apply the essential knowledge and skills embedded in the curriculum. Strong academic outcomes also indicate that the program's learning outcomes were achieved mainly, supporting the view that the curriculum and instructional approaches effectively prepared students for the creative and technical demands of the field (Robinos et al., 2025).

Table 1. *Respondents' Academic Performance (GWA)*

Descriptors	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent (1.00 – 1.24)	4	8.9
Superior (1.25 – 1.49)	19	42.2
Very Good (1.50 – 1.74)	14	31.1
Good (1.75 – 1.99)	3	6.6
Meritorious (2.00 – 2.24)	3	6.6
Very Satisfactory (2.25 – 2.49)	2	4.4

Note: Rating Scales and Descriptors are based on the student handbook (2023).

Furthermore, research indicates that GWA is not merely an academic indicator but is also influenced by a range of factors. These include the availability and use of educational resources, psychological and motivational factors, cognitive learning styles, and the learning environment. Importantly, GWA has also been linked to future professional success. For instance, Castillo (2021) found that students from private schools with higher GWAs tend to perform better in computer programming and laboratory-based courses than their peers in public high schools. In addition, studies by Khan et al. (2020) and Zhou (2023) show that an interactive classroom environment

and motivational teaching approaches are directly and positively associated with students' academic performance.

Extent of Readiness

Table 2 presents the perceived work readiness of the Multimedia Arts graduates, Batch 2025. The results indicate that graduates feel entirely ready to demonstrate competencies such as: (a) identifying current global and local issues and trends affecting the creative industries; (b) exhibiting qualities of a team player; (c) operating effectively in multidisciplinary and multicultural settings; and (d) demonstrating proficiency in drawing and composition of creative works. This high level of confidence indicates that the academic and co-curricular experiences provided by the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education, particularly the MMA department, have effectively shaped graduates' readiness for professional practice. Li et al. (2022) and Yoshida (2025) emphasize that high work readiness is influenced not only by academic training but also by psychosocial and environmental factors, as well as by the individual's intention to remain in the profession. The findings of this study support this claim, as the high readiness levels observed may stem from a nurturing and supportive learning environment, consistent exposure to real-world scenarios, and a strong sense of purpose among students, as highlighted by the college's varied research and community extension initiatives.

Table 2. *Perceived Extent of Readiness in Practicing Program Outcomes Indicators*

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
1. Design and produce printed communication materials/ collaterals	4.84	Very Ready
2. Design and produce video/film	4.98	Very Ready
3. Design and produce animated videos/films.	3.24	Somewhat Ready
4. Design and publish multimedia applications on the web.	4.04	Moderately Ready
5. Design and product 3D models and simulations for various applications.	4.22	Moderately Ready
6. Discuss the importance and influences of multimedia products and applications to the current times	5.04	Very Ready
7. Describe the practices and procedures in the development of multimedia products and applications	5.13	Very Ready
8. Evaluate and articulate design solutions within acceptable societal, aesthetic, communicative, and ethical norms	4.96	Very Ready
9. Demonstrate proficiency in drawing and composition.	5.18	Completely Ready
10. Apply drawing skills and techniques in various multimedia applications	4.80	Very Ready
11. Identify current technologies, concepts, and terminologies for multimedia applications	4.69	Very Ready
12. Demonstrate proficiency in desktop publishing applications/platforms	4.82	Very Ready
13. Demonstrate proficiency in digital video production and post-production applications/platforms	4.82	Very Ready
14. Demonstrate proficiency in digital animation applications/platforms.	4.22	Moderately Ready
15. Identify current global & local issues & trends affecting the creative industries.	5.33	Completely Ready
16. Describe major ethical and moral frameworks in industry practice	4.71	Very Ready
17. Demonstrate professional and social ethics in the production of multimedia projects	4.89	Very Ready
18. Demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in managing the processes and workflows of multimedia production	4.89	Very Ready
19. Demonstrate the qualities of a team player.	5.29	Completely Ready
20. Operate effectively in a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural setting.	5.22	Completely Ready
Overall Mean & Qualitative Description	**4.77**	**Very Ready to Practice**

Note: Performance indicators for PLOs are based on the CMO 20, s. 2017, and are approved by the academic council.
Legend: 1.0 – 1.83 Not at All Ready; 1.84 – 2.66 Slightly Ready; 2.67 – 3.49 Somewhat Ready; 3.50– 4.32 Moderately Ready; 4.33 – 5.15 Very Ready; and 5.16 – 6.00 Completely Ready

However, graduates reported only being somewhat to moderately confident in practicing skills related to: (a) designing and producing animated videos and films; (b) designing and publishing multimedia applications for the web; and (c) designing and producing 3D models and simulations for various applications. These are essential competencies in the multimedia industry, and their lower confidence ratings suggest a need for curricular and instructional enhancement in these areas. This aligns with Wu's (2024) findings that access to updated multimedia technology and resources positively influences learning satisfaction and boosts students' competence. The results of this study support that claim by highlighting the areas where technological improvements and enriched learning experiences are most needed. Therefore, the CASED and MMA Department is encouraged to implement reforms and initiatives—such as infrastructure upgrades, training in industry-standard software, and intensive, hands-on projects—to close the identified skill gaps.

Overall, the extent of work readiness among the Multimedia Arts graduates of Batch 2025 is commendable. Their competencies demonstrate a well-balanced integration of technical and soft skills that closely align with the needs of the creative industries. Bezruchko et al. (2023) note that the development of professional readiness is a complex, long-term process shaped by personal and institutional factors. The varied levels of confidence across

competencies among graduates reflect this complex developmental process and underscore the importance of responsive academic programming (Robinos et al., 2023b). These findings emphasize the department's role in continually assessing and refining strategies to strengthen student preparedness in both foundational and emerging multimedia fields.

Moreover, the expectations for Multimedia Arts graduates go beyond technical expertise. Aufa et al. (2024) and Wu (2024) highlight the importance of integrating soft skills—such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability—alongside technical proficiencies in design, animation, and media production. The graduates' confidence in interpersonal and team-oriented competencies, as mentioned by Robinos et al. (2025b), reflects the program's success in developing these essential qualities. Furthermore, as Lisnawati (2021) points out, success in learning and career performance within creative industries depends heavily on the development of multiple competencies, digital literacies, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities. These competencies are embedded in the Multimedia Arts program learning outcomes, and the study results confirm that, although many are already being realized, continuous improvement is necessary to address areas of lower confidence and to ensure industry relevance.

Relationship between Academic Performance and Extent of Readiness

The analysis shows no meaningful relationship between students' academic performance and their level of work readiness. Although many graduates earned strong academic grades, these grades do not necessarily translate into confidence or competence in applying the competencies required by the program's learning outcomes. This suggests that educational success, as reflected in classroom performance, does not fully capture the practical skills and professional behaviors expected in the multimedia industry. Several factors may explain this disconnect. High grades can sometimes result from influences that do not directly measure real-world readiness, such as variability in teaching standards, limited depth in primary course coverage, or the use of traditional assessments that emphasize recall over application. Performance in minor subjects, which may not contribute significantly to core multimedia competencies, can also inflate academic averages. These conditions may create a picture of strong academic performance that does not accurately represent a graduate's ability to perform in authentic creative and production environments.

Table 3. *Result of Chi-Square Test of Relationship Between Academic Performance & Readiness*

X^2 (Chi-Square Value)	Degrees of Freedom	Critical Value	P-value (2-Tailed)	Interpretation
8.02	6	12.592	0.23664	No Significant Relationship Exists

Note: The result is significant at $p < .05$. N=45.

Moreover, the non-association result may indicate that work readiness is shaped more by practical experiences, attitudes, and soft skills than by academic metrics alone. This aligns with Hidayat's (2022) review, which emphasizes that multimedia learning is effective when it is tailored to students' needs and aligned with industry demands, thereby contributing not only to technical competence but also to character development. Thus, even in the absence of statistical correlation, graduates must remain work-ready holistically—possessing not only knowledge and technical skills but also the attitudes and values necessary to thrive in the creative industry.

Furthermore, this calls for a systemic approach to readiness preparation. Faculty and staff must also undergo ongoing training to ensure they are equipped with relevant, up-to-date teaching strategies and technological competencies. Robinos et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of university faculty development in multimedia instruction, while Draghici et al. (2023) highlight the role of non-teaching staff in supporting enhanced learning environments. These institutional capacities directly affect the extent to which students are prepared for their careers. The findings are also supported by Jiaying et al. (2022) and Aufa et al. (2024), who conclude that work readiness among college students is influenced by a broad set of factors—ranging from motivation, academic achievement, and self-efficacy to interpersonal skills, self-regulation, participation in organizational activities, and creativity. The absence of a direct link between academic grades and readiness in this study reinforces the idea that work readiness is a multifaceted construct that extends beyond traditional academic performance. It underscores the need for educational institutions to adopt comprehensive strategies that foster both technical expertise and the soft skills critical for success in the creative industries.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that while the Multimedia Arts graduates of Batch 2025 performed well academically, with most attaining very good to superior general weighted averages (GWAs), academic performance alone does not fully explain their perceived work readiness. Graduates reported strong confidence in competencies related to teamwork, global awareness, and creative expression, indicating the positive impact of holistic learning experiences and the college's nurturing environment. However, lower confidence in technical skills such as animation, web development, and 3D modeling points to a gap between academic achievement and industry-specific readiness. This suggests that work readiness is shaped more by practical exposure, access to updated technology, and the development of soft skills than by grades alone. To address this, the following are recommended: a) **A**RTICULATE curriculum and instruction by integrating more performance-based assessments and project-based learning aligned with industry tools and trends; b) **R**ESOURCE infrastructure and technology to provide students with hands-on experience using updated software, equipment, and digital platforms essential to multimedia production; and c) **T**RANSLATE sustainable and continuous faculty development programs to ensure teaching strategies remain innovative, industry-relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of students and the creative sector.

Contributions of Authors

The corresponding authors shared greater writing responsibilities. All co-authors contributed equally to writing, data collection, analysis of the study results, and finalizing the article.

Conflict of Interests

No potential conflict of interest.

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