



Part XXIII: IAPUC Strategic Development Plan (2026-2031)

Document No.: IAPUC/STR/2026-001

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: Effective upon approval by the General Assembly

Formulating Institution: IAPUC Board of Directors, International Association of Private Universities and Colleges

Applicable Scope: The IAPUC General Assembly; Board of Directors; Secretariat; Standing Committees; members; and the IQA Accreditation System.

Preface

Since its inception, the International Association of Private Universities and Colleges (IAPUC) has undertaken a unique and urgent global mission: Establish a system of quality accreditation and membership services for private institutions of higher education that truly understand their logic, respect their diversity and have international credibility. This strategic development plan (2026-2031), the first five-year development blueprint since the establishment of the Association, carries with it the historic task of moving from inception to maturity, from institution-building to global outreach and from conceptual advocacy to substantive impact.

This plan was developed on the basis of an in-depth insight into trends in private higher education worldwide, as well as a systematic examination of the concepts, core values and established institutional systems of associations. Planning for the global roll-out of the IAPUC-IQA accreditation system as a strategic axis, with four pillars of membership development, governance optimization, financial soundness and branding, aims at making IAPUC a recognized global authoritative voice in private higher education quality assurance, and at making the IQA accreditation logo a global laissez-passer for the quality of private universities and colleges.

The next five years will be a critical period for laying the foundation of the IAPUC. This plan is not only a programme of action for the Board, but also a shared vision for the membership as a whole. The realization of this vision will require concerted efforts by the governing bodies of the Association, the secretariat and all its members. It will require broad cooperation with national education authorities, international quality assurance organizations and the higher education community. It will also require consistent adherence to the core values of rigour, impartiality, transparency, pluralism, continuous improvement and social responsibility.

Chapter I Strategic environment analysis

Article 1 Global trends in private higher education

(i) Growing size: The number and size of private higher education institutions worldwide have continued to grow over the past two decades, particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Private institutions have become an important vehicle for popularization and universalization of higher education in many countries.

(ii) Increased demand for quality: Governments, employers and the general public continue to increase their interest in and demand for the quality of private higher education as it expands. Quality assurance has become a central issue in the development of private institutions, and institutions that lack quality endorsement face growing challenges in terms of enrolment, international cooperation and mutual recognition of qualifications.

(iii) Model pluralism: private higher education is highly diversified - From elite non-profit universities to market-oriented for-profit colleges, from traditional colleges

in single campuses to cross-national education chains, from physical campuses to purely online education - plural forms require a single quality assurance framework with uniform standards and flexible adaptability.

(iv) Accelerated digitalization: The new coronary epidemic has accelerated the penetration of distance education and hybrid teaching in private higher education. Digital technology is not only a tool for teaching delivery, but also a tool for reshaping the definition, assessment and assurance of the quality of education.

(v) Increased international competition and cooperation: the cross-border operation of private institutions and increased international enrolment. At the same time, international mutual recognition of national quality assurance systems and the development of transnational quality assurance networks are accelerating. In this pattern, the international credibility of quality accreditation systems has become the core competitiveness of private institutions.

Article 2 Strategic positioning of the Association

Among the global trends in private higher education, the IAPUC strategy is to:

To become an exclusive platform for quality assurance in private higher education globally - to provide private institutions with quality benchmarks that are both internationally credible and fully respectful of their academic characteristics by establishing and promoting an internal quality accreditation system specifically for private universities and colleges; and to promote global cooperation and development of private higher education communities through membership networks and knowledge sharing.

This strategic orientation has given IAPUC a clear and unique place in the existing international quality assurance ecology of higher education: It does not directly compete with professional accreditations in business such as AACSB, EQUIS, nor replicate the functions of national quality assurance frameworks in various countries, but rather fills the gaps in the global system of “integrated accreditation systems specifically for private institutions”.

Article 3 SWOT Analysis

1. The only private universities in the world have exclusive and integrated accreditation positioning.

4. The International Quality Assurance Network (INQAAHE) promotes confidence-building. The established business accreditation system (AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA, etc.) has been the first to prevail in some areas.

Emerging quality assurance agencies can generate competition

Chapter II Vision, mission and strategic objectives

Article 4 Vision 2026-2031

By 2031, IAPUC became:

The global authoritative voice of private higher education quality accreditation, the IQA accreditation logo, has become a global pass for private university and college quality.

Article 5 Mission 2026-2031

During the planning period, the core mission of IAPUC is to:

To complete the strategic transformation from system-building to global outreach, the IQA accreditation system will form a scaled accreditation community and verifiable quality impact on at least three continents.

Article 6 Strategic objectives

Overall objective: By 2031, IAPUC will have achieved the following five strategic objectives:

The IQA Accreditation System is widely recognized by the private higher education community worldwide as having no fewer than 80 cumulatively, covering no less than 20 countries and territories. The total number of members (including formal, accredited and associate members) of diverse and sustainable member networks is not less than 200, and individual members are not less than 500.

Chapter III Strategic pillars

In order to achieve the above-mentioned strategic objectives, IAPUC focused on the following four strategic pillars during the period 2026-2031:

Pillar I: Accreditation system optimization and global outreach (core pillar)

Article 7 Objectives and actions

Objective: To transform the IQA accreditation system from the text of the system to internationally credible accreditation practices, complete pilot implementation and achieve scale accreditation.

Core actions:

(i) Pilot implementation phase (2027 April-2027 December) 1. Selection of 5-8 private institutions representing different regions, sizes and types of private institutions to conduct IQA accreditation pilot;

Testing, in the pilot, the operational effectiveness of the components of the accreditation process - self-assessment guidance, desk reviews, site visits and accreditation decisions;

3. Complete the systematic revision of accreditation standards, processes and evaluation tools based on pilot feedback;

4. Preparation of a pilot assessment report on IQA accreditation, reporting on the results of the pilot to the Board and the Member Conference.

(ii) Initial extension phase (January 2028 - December 2029) 1. The Accreditation System was officially launched and fully accepted applications for accreditation from private institutions worldwide;

2. Organizing at least one accreditation session or standard-specification event each in Asia, Europe and North America;

The establishment of a network of “accreditation model colleges” in cooperation with accredited early institutions to provide examples of outreach;

Accumulated 25-35 places, covering at least 10 countries and territories.

(iii) The scaling phase (January 2030-2031, December) 1. Establishment of an accredited group covering at least three continents;

To conduct a mid-term review and evaluation of the first accreditation standards system based on the accumulation of accreditation practices;

3. Accumulated 80 projects covering no less than 20 countries and territories.

(iv) Continuous improvement of standards and methods. 1. Establishment of a working group on the maintenance of IQA accreditation standards, responsible for periodic review and revision of standards;

2. Organization of at least one review expert calibration meeting per year to enhance evaluation consistency;

3. Establishment of a mechanism for follow-up and validation of academic performance.

Pillar II: Membership development and deepening of services

Article 8 Objectives and actions

Objective: To establish an incremental, well-sized, participatory network of members covering major regions of the globe.

Core actions:

(i) Membership expansion. Develop sub-regional membership development goals focusing on developed regions of private higher education;

2. Establishment of partnerships with private university associations in various countries to promote the IAPUC membership system through their associations;
3. Provide clear guidance and support on the path to promotion from associate to full membership, from full membership to accredited membership;
4. By 2031, the total membership of the body was over 200 (including full, accredited and associate members) and the number of individual members was over 500.

(ii) Member service deepening 1. Establish self-assessment mentoring and peer support mechanisms for accredited members;

2. Publication of the quarterly IAPUC Member Newsletter and the annual Global Private Higher Education Quality Watch report;

3. Building online member community platforms for communication, cooperation and knowledge sharing among members;

4. Conduct regular membership needs surveys to incorporate feedback into annual work plans.

(iii) Member participation in governance 1. Improvement of democratic participatory mechanisms in member assemblies and councils;

2. Development of thematic networks and regional working groups led by members;

Establishment of the annual IAPUC Award for Outstanding Contributions, to recognize institutions and individuals that have a prominent contribution to make in terms of quality enhancement and membership services.

Pillar III: Optimization of governance and financial soundness

Article 9 Objectives and actions

Objective: To establish an efficient, transparent, widely trusted organizational governance structure and a sustainable financial base.

Core actions:

(i) Optimization of the governance structure. Establish a formalized operational mechanism for the Board 's professional committees to ensure that they remain active during the planning period;

2. Progressive improvement of the international representation and professional diversity of IQA quality Accreditation Commission;

3. Improve systems for regular self-assessment and information disclosure by governance bodies.

(ii) Team-building 1. During the planning period, a core full-time team of 12-18 personnel will be established in phases, covering five functions: accreditation management, membership services, research publishing, branding and administrative finance;

2. Establish systematic staff training and development plans;

3. Development of the SAPUC Staff Manual and Human Resource Management System.

(iii) Financial sustainability 1. Strict adherence to the IQA certified internal financial system to ensure the effective functioning of the dual reporting structure of the Treasury;

Developing a diversified income structure - contribution income, income from accreditation services and income from modest workshops and activities, gradually reducing dependence on single sources of funding;

3. Maintaining an operating reserve of not less than 30 per cent of annual expenditure and safeguarding the financial viability and emergency capacity of the Association;

4. By 2031, realize that the Institute ' s recurrent income covers all operating expenses and has a modest financial surplus for system development and strategic reserves.

Pillar IV: Branding and ideological leadership

Article 10 Objectives and actions

Objective: To build IAPUC into a globally recognized knowledge authority and industry voice in private higher education quality assurance.

Core actions:

(i) Branding system construction: completion of the IAPUC-IQA full visual recognition system manual, which harmonizes the visual image of the association and accreditation system globally;

2. Establishment of an official website of the Association and a digital media dissemination matrix covering at least three languages: English, Chinese and Spanish;

3. Production of a series of association and accreditation systems providing video and promotional materials.

(ii) Knowledge production and dissemination. Since 2028, the annual report of the Global Private Higher Education Quality Watch has been published annually to analyse global trends in private higher education quality and IQA accreditation practices;

2. Establishment of the IAPUC Best Practices Casebook, selection and dissemination of best practices in quality enhancement;

3. Support and encourage the publication of studies, policy briefs and academic papers by the Institute ' s panels and members on the subject of quality assurance in private higher education.

- (iii) Industry participation and public impact
1. Active participation in meetings and activities of international quality assurance networks such as INQAAHE to enhance the visibility and voice of IAPUC in the international quality assurance community;
 2. Establish channels of dialogue with national education authorities and international organizations to promote knowledge and recognition of the system of accreditation of private institutions;
 3. The professional voice of the IAPUC is given in due course when major public discussions arise on the quality of private higher education. The issuance of a trade statement is subject to approval by the Secretary-General and the authorization of the Board for major positions.

Chapter IV Phased implementation of the road map

The first phase of the key milestones: completion of the foundation and pilot system construction in 2026 May-2027; pilot accreditation implementation and evaluation; initial networking of members; roll-out of the entire system of documentation for the official network and brand-building; release of the pilot assessment report; first phase of the initial membership: issuance and initial roll-out of the IQA accreditation in 2028 January-2029; first approval of the original accreditation; convening of the first membership conference; publication of at least 25 annual industry reports; signing of agreements or substantive promotion of more than 100 members; renewal of the second phase: scale and mutual recognition in 2030; continuous expansion of the size of the organization in December 2031; signing of the international mutual recognition agreement; financial sustainability; accreditation of the organization; achievement of 80 international accreditation; signing of agreements or substantive advancement of not more than 200 member States

Chapter V Resource needs and security

Article 11 Financial resources

- (i) The main sources of income during the planning period are income from activities such as membership fees, fees for IQA accreditation services and reasonable workshops;
- (ii) It is expected that, following the official issuance of the accreditation in 2028, recurrent income will gradually cover operating expenses as the number of accredited institutions increases;
- (iii) At the early stages of the planning process, reasonable use could be made of the membership dues of the founding members and the initial funds of the association to guarantee the smooth implementation of the pilot and the initial establishment of the team;

(iv) Actively explore applications for project funding from education foundations and international organizations to support non-profit specialty projects such as knowledge production, quality research and capacity-building.

Article 12 Human resources

(i) During the planning period, the Association ' s core dedicated team is planned as follows:

- Phase I (2026-2027): 4-6 persons (Secretary-General, Commissioner for Accreditation, Member Service Commissioner, Executive Finance Commissioner);
- Phase II (2028-2029): 8-12 persons (additional research publishing, branding, regional liaison, etc.);
- Phase III (2030-2031): 12-18 persons (proportional growth based on the scale of accreditation and expansion of membership networks).

(ii) beyond the core team, leveraging organizational capacity based on voluntary or part-time contributions from members of the Topeer reviewer bank, the Quality Renewal Network and the Professional Commission.

Article 13 Technical resources

(i) Establishment of an integrated accreditation management information platform to achieve online management of the entire process from application, review to ongoing oversight;

(ii) Building online membership communities and knowledge-base platforms to provide members with the technical support to communicate, share and access resources;

(iii) Ensuring the security and data protection compliance of the Association's information systems - completion of privacy impact assessments prior to the platform's construction, security tests and stress tests during the pilot operation phase, followed by periodic security audits and penetration tests.

Chapter VI Risk management

Article 14 Key risks and mitigation strategies

(b) Strict ongoing monitoring and timely major change reports responding to operational risks;

(c) Strict data security management and backup recovery mechanisms in the event of serious data leakage from the accreditation management platform; and the strict enforcement of conflict-of-interest declaration and avoidance systems in cases of conflict of interest or misconduct involving members of the Information Security Incidents Response Management Risk Board or ADC;

Open channels for reporting and complaints; regular self-assessment of governance bodies

Chapter VII Monitoring, assessment and amendment

Article 15 Annual monitoring

- (i) The annual progress report of the Secretary-General to the Board on the strategic development plan, which assesses progress, deviation analysis and impact factors towards the objectives of the current year against the strategic objectives set out in the plan and the road map for its implementation;
- (ii) Annual progress reports must contain actual achievement values for key indicators, a comparative analysis with milestones and suggested adjustments to the next implementation plan.

Article 16 Mid-term assessment

At the end of 2028 (on the eve of the start of phase II), the Board organized or commissioned a comprehensive mid-term assessment of progress towards the achievement of the planning objectives, the impact of strategic environmental changes on the feasibility of planning, the effectiveness of strategic actions and the need to revise the implementation path and target set for phase III.

The mid-term assessment report is open to all voting members.

Article 17 Planned adjustments

The Council may adjust the planning in the following circumstances:

- (i) Strategic environmental change was identified by a comprehensive assessment as requiring adjustments in objectives and pathways;
- (ii) The mid-term evaluation recommended amendments;
- (iii) Major planning-related resolutions of the Member Conferences.

The approval of a two-thirds majority of the Board shall be required for any substantive adjustments planned.

Chapter VIII Annex

Article 18 Relationship to other documents

This plan links the strategic and executive levels with the following documents:

The project plan for the implementation of the IAPUC-IQA Project Plan as set out in the statute, which focuses on the development of the IQA Accreditation Internal Financial System as a whole (completed), and the financial objectives of the plan are linked to the requirements of the IQA Reserve and revenue and expenditure management of the IAPUC membership standards and contribution provisions, and the members' development objectives as planned in the charter are based on the contribution framework as the basis for the revenue forward assessment.

Article 19 Approval and entry into force of plans

Following its adoption by the IAPUC Board, this plan is submitted to the General Assembly for approval and will enter into force on the date of its approval. Any planned revision shall be proposed by the Board and adopted by a two-thirds majority of all members of the Board.

Article 20 Planned public launches

Following approval by the Member Assembly, the plan is made publicly available in summary form on the IAPUC official website, and the progress made in the implementation of the plan and the achievement of key indicators are continuously disclosed in the annual report of the Association.

Document Approval

Role	Name / Position	Date
Prepared by	IAPUC Board Strategic Planning Working Group	May 2026
Reviewed by	IAPUC Board of Directors	Pending
Approved by	IAPUC General Assembly	Pending

Copyright Notice

The intellectual property rights in this document and the IAPUC Strategic Development Plan (2026-2031) contained herein belong to the International Association of Private Universities and Colleges (IAPUC). No institution or individual may reproduce, modify or use this document for commercial purposes without prior written authorization from IAPUC.