



Part XL: Working Methods of the Accredited Institutions Mutual Assistance Committee

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Formulating Institution: IAPUC Quality Accreditation Committee, International Association of Private Universities and Colleges

Applicable Scope: All private higher education institutions holding IQA accreditation, together with Full Members invited by the Mutual Assistance Committee to participate in specified activities.

Preface

From its establishment, the IAPUC-IQA Accreditation System has recognized Continual Improvement as a core value. Accreditation is not the end of the quality journey, but the marker of a new beginning. Institutions are not islands on the road to improvement. Each accredited institution accumulates distinctive experience and lessons in quality assurance: some excel in a particular domain, while others find innovative paths to solve particular problems. If this dispersed wisdom can be gathered, shared and passed on, the entire community of accredited institutions will benefit from collective experience.

The Accredited Institutions Mutual Assistance Committee institutionalizes this idea of peer support. It is neither a new level of management nor an additional compliance burden. It is a professional community driven by accredited institutions and facilitated by the IQA Office, where institutions learn from and support one another and grow together.

These Working Methods provide a clear framework for organization, operation and development. They follow voluntary participation, equal reciprocity, confidentiality and respect, and fully recognize institutional autonomy. Participation is an active choice based on development needs, not an externally imposed obligation. The Committee neither replaces the accreditation-management functions of the IQA Office nor interferes with independence of review. It creates a separate, constructive channel of inter-institutional cooperation beyond the review process.

Chapter I General Provisions

Article 1 Purpose and Basis

These Working Methods are intended to:

- (1) establish an institutionalized and standardized mechanism of mutual cooperation among accredited institutions, promoting the sharing and transmission of quality-assurance experience;
- (2) provide a platform for institutions with outstanding practice in particular areas to present and share it, while giving other institutions opportunities for peer learning;
- (3) promote peer exchange and cooperative networks, strengthening cohesion and shared growth across the accredited community; and
- (4) provide feedback and material from institutional practice for continual improvement of the IQA Accreditation System and identification and dissemination of best practice.

These Working Methods are formulated on the basis of:

- the strategic goals for member services and optimization of accreditation in the *IAPUC Strategic Development Plan (2026-2031)*;

- the framework requirements for peer-support networks and professional exchange in the *Accredited Institution Capacity-Building and Development Guidelines*; and
- the concept of accredited-institution network development in the *IQA International Dual-Accreditation and Mutual Recognition Agreement Negotiation Guidelines*.

Article 2 Positioning of the Committee

The Accredited Institutions Mutual Assistance Committee is a voluntary cooperative network of IQA-accredited institutions whose core functions are peer support and professional exchange. It is not an administrative level or regulatory body; it does not replace any accreditation-management function of the IQA Office or interfere with review independence. Every activity serves quality enhancement in participating institutions.

Article 3 Basic Principles

Principle	Core Meaning
Voluntary Participation	An accredited institution may choose whether to join. After joining, participation in each activity also remains voluntary and no mandatory task is imposed.
Equality and Reciprocity	Every institution has equal status regardless of size or accreditation level. Mutual assistance is two-way: each contributor is also a learner.
Confidentiality and Respect	Internal information and experience shared in an activity shall not be communicated externally or used for another purpose without the sharing institution's express consent.
Practice-Oriented	Activities focus on genuine problems and effective experience in quality assurance and emphasize practical, operational value.
Non-Commercial	Every activity promotes quality and is non-commercial. No charge shall be made beyond shared direct costs.

Chapter II Organization and Membership

Article 4 Eligibility

- (1) Every institution holding Provisional, Full or Comprehensive IQA Accreditation is eligible to join.
- (2) A newly accredited institution becomes eligible when its decision takes effect.
- (3) Membership ends when accreditation expires or is revoked. It may be renewed if accredited status is restored.
- (4) An IAPUC Full Member not yet accredited may apply to observe selected public activities. Associate and Individual Members are ineligible.

Article 5 Joining and Withdrawal

- (1) An institution joins by submitting an *Application to Join the Mutual Assistance Committee* through its Quality Representative to the IQA Office. The application may state principal areas of strength and priority areas for learning.
- (2) No approval is required; submission constitutes membership. An institution may withdraw at any time by written notice to the IQA Office.

Article 6 Steering Group

- (1) A Steering Group shall prepare the annual activity plan and coordinate activities generally. It is not a new management level and its duties are limited to service coordination.
- (2) The Steering Group shall comprise:
 - the Director of the IQA Office or a representative, serving as Convener; and
 - three Quality Representatives from accredited institutions elected by Committee members for two-year terms, renewable once.
- (3) Decisions shall be made by consensus where possible. If consensus cannot be reached, the majority view shall prevail, but every decision must comply with the purpose and principles of these Working Methods.
- (4) The Steering Group shall meet online at least annually to review the preceding year's effectiveness and the current year's plan.

Chapter III Mutual Assistance Activities

Article 7 Types of Activity

- (1) Thematic Experience-Sharing Sessions

Around a specific topic such as Assurance of Learning systems, multi-campus quality coordination or academic-integrity assurance in distance education, institutions with outstanding or innovative practice shall be invited to present cases and other institutions to discuss and ask questions. Sessions shall be primarily online, each focusing on one or two topics for 60-90 minutes, with 2-4 sessions each year.

(2) Peer Visits

With voluntary agreement of both institutions, one may host the other's Quality Representative or quality-assurance team members for a short visit to learn directly from facilities, processes and practice in a particular area.

Visits shall consist principally of in-depth working-level exchange. Visitors should communicate learning needs in advance, and the host shall arrange a reasonable schedule according to its resources and willingness. The visitor bears its own cost and logistics; the host charges no hosting fee. After receiving confirmation from both, the Committee shall assist liaison and provide a suggested visit framework where needed.

(3) Quality Representative Exchange Circles

Small groups shall be formed by similar region or shared concern for regular informal peer dialogue and experience exchange, normally including 3-8 institutions to facilitate depth.

(4) Joint Seminars and Collaborative Resource Development

Institutions are encouraged to study shared challenges jointly. With voluntary contribution, support tools tested through joint study and practice, such as rubric templates or curriculum-review frameworks, may be shared with Committee members through the IQA Online Resource Centre.

Article 8 Organization of Activities

(1) At the beginning of each year, the Steering Group shall prepare the annual activity plan and the IQA Office shall distribute it to all members.

(2) Activities shall be primarily online. An in-person activity may be organized where an institution volunteers to host it and no registration fee is charged.

(3) After annual activities conclude, the Steering Group shall prepare a brief summary including number of activities, number of participating institutions, principal outcomes and feedback, for distribution through the IQA Office.

Article 9 Safeguarding Non-Commercial Operation

(1) No activity shall become a commercial conference or training event charging participants. Basic organizational costs shall be covered in the annual IQA Office budget. Direct incremental costs of an in-person activity, such as venue or catering, shall be shared fairly by participating institutions.

(2) An institution sharing practice shall not use the occasion to promote or sell its commercial products or services.

(3) No organization or person shall conduct commercial promotion or student recruitment during an activity.

Chapter IV Rights and Obligations

Article 10 Rights of Members

Members have the right to:

- (1) participate equally in activities;
- (2) share their quality-assurance practice and experience;
- (3) propose topics and priority learning areas;
- (4) elect and be elected to the Steering Group; and
- (5) withdraw voluntarily.

Article 11 Obligations of Members

Members shall:

- (1) comply with these Working Methods, particularly confidentiality;
- (2) participate sincerely, openly and constructively, sharing candidly and learning humbly with mutual respect;
- (3) ensure that information shared is true and accurate and does not deliberately mislead peers;
- (4) respect the host's premises rules and privacy during a peer visit and avoid unnecessary disruption to normal teaching; and
- (5) not turn the Committee into a venue for commercial promotion or destructive competition.

Article 12 Confidentiality

- (1) Internal quality data, unpublished policies and details of practice shared during an activity shall not be communicated outside the Committee without express consent.
- (2) Participants must keep non-public information about peer institutions confidential. This duty continues after withdrawal.
- (3) The Committee shall not require information beyond what an institution volunteers, and no adverse inference shall arise from reservations in sharing.

Chapter V Relationship with the IQA Accreditation System

Article 13 Relationship with Accreditation Review

(1) Activities are independent of IQA review. The extent and quality of an institution's participation shall not inform review.

(2) Review experts shall not attend non-public activities, preserving candid sharing. With consent, an experience case may be anonymized and shared as good-practice material, but shall remain unrelated to any particular accreditation case.

(3) Members shall not conduct rehearsals or coaching for accreditation review. Discussion of standards and processes shall remain explanatory and collegial and shall not extend to advice on a particular outcome.

Article 14 Relationship with the IQA Office

(1) The IQA Office shall provide administrative facilitation and liaison support, including activity organization, maintenance of the member contact list and distribution of information.

(2) The Director or representative serves as Convener and coordinator but has no additional decision-making authority beyond other Steering Group members.

(3) The IQA Office shall provide budget and personnel for administrative support and maintain the independence of activities.

Chapter VI Supplementary Provisions

Article 15 Relationship with Other Regulatory Documents

Document	Relationship with These Working Methods
<i>Accredited Institution Capacity-Building and Development Guidelines</i>	These Working Methods institutionalize and detail the peer-support network in those Guidelines.
<i>IQA Accreditation Institution Quality Representative Management Measures</i>	The Quality Representative is the institution's principal liaison for Committee activities.

Document	Relationship with These Working Methods
<i>IQA Accreditation Observer System Management Measures</i>	Mutual-assistance activities and the observer system are complementary channels for peer learning.

Article 16 Interpretation and Amendment

(1) These Working Methods shall be interpreted by the IAPUC Quality Accreditation Committee.

(2) Any amendment must be approved by the IAPUC Board of Directors. The Steering Group may propose revisions to the Quality Accreditation Committee based on operational experience.

Article 17 Entry into Force

These Working Methods shall enter into force on the date of approval by the IAPUC Board of Directors. The first Steering Group shall be formed within three months thereafter.

Appendix: Application to Join (Template)

The form shall include institutional name and accreditation number; Quality Representative and principal contact; principal areas of quality-assurance strength, optional; priority areas for learning, optional; confirmation of compliance with these Working Methods; and the Quality Representative's signature.

Document Approval

Role	Name/Position	Date
Drafted by	IAPUC Quality Accreditation Committee, Institutional Mutual Assistance Working Group	May 2026
Reviewed by	IAPUC Quality Accreditation Committee	Pending
Approved by	IAPUC Board of Directors	Pending

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