



Part Eight: IQA Accreditation Academic Ethics and Code of Conduct

IAPUC Internal Quality Assurance System

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Applicable Recipients: Global private universities, private colleges and private higher vocational education institutions applying for or maintaining IAPUC-IQA accreditation, as well as all experts and staff participating in accreditation review work

Preface

Academic ethics and morality are the cornerstones of higher education and the unshakable core values of the quality assurance accreditation system. Since its establishment, the IAPUC-IQA accreditation system has adhered to "Rigor" and "Social Responsibility" as its core values, and incorporated "Ethics and Compliance" as the first standard domain of the accreditation standard system. This specification institutionalizes and implements these core values.

Integrating international best practices in academic ethics and combining the school-running characteristics of private higher education institutions, this specification establishes a complete ethical governance framework covering institutional codes of conduct, academic integrity, review ethics, and violation handling mechanisms. IAPUC firmly believes that the true quality of a private university or college is reflected not only in its curricula, faculty and academic achievements, but also in its reverence for and practice of academic ethics — quality without ethical bottom lines is not genuine quality.

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Article 1 Purposes and Basis

This specification aims to:

- (1) Establish the academic ethics and moral standards upheld and required by the IAPUC-IQA accreditation system;
- (2) Provide institutional guidelines for academic ethics governance for institutions applying for and obtaining accreditation;
- (3) Standardize ethical behaviors in the accreditation review process and safeguard the impartiality and credibility of accreditation;
- (4) Establish mechanisms for the identification, handling and rectification of academic misconduct and ethical violations.

This specification is formulated with reference to the following international norms and frameworks:

International Council for Science (ICSU) *Principles of Scientific Universality*;

World Conference on Research Integrity *Singapore Statement on Research Integrity* (2010);

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) *Core Practice Guidelines*;

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers* (2017 Revised Edition);

Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) *International Ethical Guidelines for Health-related Research Involving Humans*;

Ethics and social responsibility requirements of international accreditation systems including AACSB and EQUIS.

Article 2 Scope of Application

This specification applies to:

- (1) All private higher education institutions that have obtained or are applying for IAPUC-IQA accreditation (hereinafter referred to as "Accredited Institutions");
- (2) All members of Accredited Institutions, including but not limited to administrators, teachers, researchers, students, administrative staff, and employed personnel participating in academic activities in any form;
- (3) All personnel participating in IAPUC-IQA accreditation review, including peer review experts, members of the Accreditation Decision Committee, members of the Appeal and Arbitration Committee, and staff of the IQA Office.

Article 3 Basic Principles

The IAPUC-IQA academic ethics system implements the following five basic principles:

Principle	Core Connotation
Honesty	Maintain truthfulness and accuracy in all academic activities without deception, and truthfully report research processes, data, results and academic contributions.
Fairness	Adhere to objectivity and neutrality in academic evaluation, accreditation review and benefit distribution, excluding prejudices and improper influences.
Respect	Respect academic freedom, intellectual property rights, personal dignity and cultural diversity, and protect the rights and interests of research participants.
Accountability	Assume personal and institutional accountability for academic behaviors and accept peer supervision and public accountability.
Transparency	Maintain openness in institutional design, decision-making processes and interest relationships to ensure traceability and auditability.

Chapter 2 Institutional Academic Ethics

Governance

Article 4 Ethical Governance Framework

Accredited Institutions shall establish a university-wide academic ethics governance framework, including at least the following organizational elements:

Academic Ethics Committee (or Equivalent Body)

Institutions shall set up an independent Academic Ethics Committee reporting directly to the chief academic officer or university president. The responsibilities of the committee include:

Formulating and revising institutional academic ethics policies;

Reviewing research projects involving human participants and animals;

Accepting and investigating reports of academic misconduct;

Putting forward ethical suggestions and issuing annual ethical reports to university leadership.

Ethics Policy System

Institutions shall formulate and publicly release the following core ethical policy documents:

Academic Integrity Policy;

Research Ethics Review System;

Academic Misconduct Investigation and Handling Measures;

Conflict of Interest Management System;

Whistleblower Protection System.

Ethics Education and Training

Institutions shall incorporate academic ethics education into:

Freshman orientation education and new faculty induction training;

Compulsory modules of research methodology courses;

Special research ethics training for graduate students;

Regular continuing ethical education for all faculty members.

Article 5 Basic Academic Integrity Requirements

Accredited Institutions shall establish clear academic integrity standards and violation handling mechanisms in the following areas:

5.1 Authenticity of Academic Achievements

Forgery, falsification or selective reporting of research data and results are strictly prohibited;

Plagiarism and appropriation of others' academic achievements are strictly prohibited;

Improper authorship is strictly prohibited — authorship shall be based on substantive academic contributions, and all authors shall bear corresponding responsibilities for the content of achievements;

Multiple submissions and duplicate publication of the same work are strictly prohibited (excluding explicitly annotated translations, adaptations or invited re-publications).

5.2 Standardization of Research Processes

Research shall comply with discipline-recognized methodological standards and academic conventions;

Original data and experimental records shall be properly preserved for a minimum of 5 years from the date of achievement publication;

Research shall undergo appropriate peer review and public verification.

5.3 Standardization of Academic Citation

Sources of cited works shall be accurately annotated;

Citation shall be based on genuine reading and understanding of original literature; false citation and inaccurate citation are prohibited;

Improper self-citation and citation alliances for the purpose of boosting citation indicators are prohibited.

Article 6 Research Ethics Review

Accredited Institutions shall establish a formal research ethics review mechanism to ensure that all research projects involving human participants, animals or sensitive data obtain ethical approval prior to commencement. Specific requirements are as follows:

Research Involving Human Participants

Research proposals shall be submitted for ethical review, covering informed consent procedures, risk assessment and mitigation measures, privacy protection, and special protection for vulnerable groups;

Informed consent shall be voluntary, fully informed and revocable at any time;

Research participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any adverse consequences.

Research Involving Animals

Research shall follow the 3R principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement;

All animal research shall undergo experimental animal ethics review procedures;

Animal breeding and use shall comply with corresponding welfare standards.

Data Research Ethics

Research involving personal data shall comply with data protection regulations, implementing data minimization and anonymization;

Adequate security protection measures shall be adopted for the storage and transmission of sensitive data;

The purpose and scope of data use shall be clearly defined prior to research implementation and shall not exceed the scope of original authorization.

Article 7 Conflict of Interest Management

Institutions shall establish an institution-wide conflict of interest management system:

Disclosure Obligations

All management personnel with decision-making authority, academic leaders with resource allocation rights, and faculty participating in admissions and review work shall declare potential conflicts of interest regularly (at least once a year);

Faculty serving as board members, consultants or holding significant shares in external institutions shall disclose such information to the institution.

Conflict Management

Institutions shall assess and implement hierarchical management of disclosed conflicts of interest;

Personnel with major conflicts of interest shall recuse themselves from relevant decision-making processes;

Records of conflict of interest disclosure and management shall be properly retained.

Financial Interest Management

Institutional financial decisions shall be separated from academic decisions;

Income distribution mechanisms shall be open and transparent to prevent financial interests from undermining academic judgment.

Chapter 3 Faculty and Student Academic Ethics

Article 8 Faculty Academic Ethics Code

All faculty members of Accredited Institutions shall comply with the following academic ethics codes:

Teaching Ethics

Respect students' right to learn and developmental needs, and treat all students equally without discrimination based on non-academic factors such as race, gender, religion, nationality and sexual orientation;

Course content shall faithfully reflect the current status and development of disciplinary knowledge without distorting teaching content based on personal stance;

Evaluate students' academic performance fairly and impartially with transparent and uniformly applied assessment standards;

Prohibit academic exploitation of students, including but not limited to unauthorized use of students' academic achievements, seizure of students' authorship rights, and requiring students to engage in work unreasonably unrelated to their studies.

Mentorship Ethics

Mentors shall provide reasonable academic guidance and career development support to students;

Mentors shall not abuse power imbalances to conduct sexual harassment, emotional manipulation or other forms of power abuse against students;

Mentors shall respect students' independent academic interests and career choices and shall not treat students as subordinates of personal research projects.

Peer Ethics

Adhere to academic standards and exclude non-academic interference in peer review, professional title evaluation, academic awards and other activities;

Malicious denigration of peers' achievements and improper pursuit of benefits for peers are prohibited;

In academic cooperation, contribute sincerely, allocate authorship reasonably and share achievements fairly.

Article 9 Student Academic Ethics Code

Institutions shall educate and require students to comply with the following academic ethics requirements:

Academic Integrity in Studies

Complete assignments, examinations and academic assessments independently

without cheating in any form;

All submitted works and achievements shall be original, with standardized annotation for cited content;

Proxy writing and commissioned writing are prohibited; dishonest use of AI tools to complete academic assessments is prohibited. Where AI use is permitted by the institution, the scope of use and declaration requirements shall be clearly specified.

Research Integrity

Comply with the same integrity standards as researchers and supervisors when participating in research projects;

Do not fabricate or falsify data, and truthfully report research processes;

Protect confidential information and participant privacy accessed during research activities.

Academic Community Responsibility

Abide by basic academic discussion etiquette and respect diverse academic viewpoints;

Report academic misconduct through official channels with obligation to refrain from participation and concealment of such behaviors;

Cherish personal academic reputation and avoid damaging long-term academic integrity for short-term benefits.

Chapter 4 Institutional Ethical Responsibilities to Stakeholders

Article 10 Ethical Responsibilities to Students and Parents

Accredited Institutions shall assume the following basic ethical responsibilities to students and parents:

Provide truthful, accurate and complete enrollment information without false promises or misleading publicity;

Clearly specify tuition fees, miscellaneous charges, refund policies and degree awarding conditions to guarantee the right to know;

Protect students' personal safety and personal dignity on campus;

Maintain unobstructed student appeal channels and safeguard students' due process rights.

Article 11 Ethical Responsibilities to Employers and Society

Accredited Institutions shall assume the following ethical responsibilities to employers and society:

Awarded degrees and certificates shall truly reflect the holders' academic proficiency without inflated or false certification;

Maintain accuracy and honesty in the release of graduate employment data and school-running achievement publicity;

Give back to the community with educational and research resources within capacity and undertake positive social responsibilities.

Article 12 Ethical Responsibilities to Environment and Sustainable Development

IAPUC encourages Accredited Institutions to integrate sustainable development into the school-running ethical framework:

Reduce resource waste and carbon emissions by controlling environmental impacts in campus operations;

Incorporate sustainable development topics into curricula and research initiatives;

Cultivate graduates with ecological responsibility awareness and social care.

Chapter 5 Accreditation Review Ethics

Article 13 Ethical Code for Review Experts

All experts participating in IAPUC-IQA accreditation review shall abide by the following ethical codes:

Impartiality and Independence

Review judgments shall be based on accreditation standards and objective evidence, free from personal preferences, academic prejudices or regional sectarian views;

No deviation from impartial stance due to personal relationships or external pressure;

No promises or hints regarding accreditation results to any stakeholders during the review process.

Conflict of Interest Recusal

Strictly declare and recuse from conflicts of interest in accordance with Article 26 of the *IAPUC-IQA Accreditation Process Specification*;

Carefully check for potential conflicts prior to accepting review appointments without fluke mentality.

Confidentiality Obligations

Strictly keep confidential institutional information and internal discussion content accessed during reviews;

No discussion of review cases in private occasions or on social media platforms;

No use of review information and evidence for personal academic or other purposes;

Confidentiality obligations remain valid after the completion of review work.

Professional Norms

Fully prepare for review work and thoroughly study self-evaluation materials to ensure adequate review input;

Adhere to professional etiquette in seminars and interviews, avoid interrogative questioning, and respect the dignity of interviewees;

Prepare review reports objectively, accurately and completely to reflect review findings without biased interpretation.

Article 14 Ethical Code for Decision-Making Bodies

Members of the Accreditation Decision Committee (ADC) and the Appeal and Arbitration Committee shall comply with the following codes:

Decisions shall be based on facts and evidence in case files, free from off-case information interference;

Content of decision meeting discussions shall be strictly confidential, with no disclosure of individual committee members' opinions and voting details;

ADC members shall not serve as Peer Review Team (PRT) members for the same case to ensure functional separation of review and decision-making;

Take initiative to declare conflicts and recuse from voting if there is an interest connection with the case.

Article 15 Ethical Code for IQA Office Staff

Staff of the IQA Office shall comply with the following requirements in accreditation work:

Treat all applicant institutions fairly and equally without differential treatment based on institutional scale, region or reputation;

Strictly implement accreditation standards, process specifications and time limits without arbitrary procedural adjustments;

Guarantee the security and confidentiality of information submitted by institutions;

No solicitation or acceptance of improper benefits from institutions by taking advantage of professional authority.

Chapter 6 Identification and Handling of Academic Misconduct

Article 16 Definition of Academic Misconduct

The IAPUC-IQA accreditation framework defines the following acts as academic misconduct:

- (1) Fabrication: Inventing non-existent data, processes, sources or other academic materials;
- (2) Falsification: Manipulating research materials, equipment or processes, altering or omitting data or results to render research records inaccurate and inconsistent with actual research;
- (3) Plagiarism: Using others' ideas, processes, results or texts without proper attribution;
- (4) Improper Authorship: Listing non-contributing personnel as authors, intentionally excluding personnel with substantive contributions, or affixing signatures without consent;
- (5) Duplicate Publication: Publishing the same research achievement in multiple papers without proper explanation;
- (6) False Statement: Intentionally providing false information in accreditation applications, self-evaluation reports or any documents submitted to IAPUC;
- (7) Investigation Obstruction: Obstructing, interfering with or retaliating against reports and investigations of academic misconduct;
- (8) Other serious violations of recognized academic ethics.

Article 17 Institutional Internal Investigation Mechanism

Accredited Institutions shall establish formal reporting and investigation procedures for academic misconduct, which shall meet the following requirements:

Provide secure and confidential reporting channels (including anonymous reporting options);

Protect bona fide whistleblowers from retaliation;

Investigations shall follow due process and guarantee the right of defense for reported parties;

Written investigation reports shall be formed upon completion, and basic conclusions

shall be notified to both parties within the scope permitted by confidentiality rules;

Proportionate disciplinary measures shall be imposed for verified academic misconduct based on circumstances and consequences.

Disciplinary measures include but are not limited to:

Requiring retraction or correction of academic achievements;

Issuing formal warnings or reprimands;

Revoking academic honors, awards or qualifications;

Suspending teaching or supervising qualifications;

Terminating employment or imposing student disciplinary sanctions.

Article 18 Accreditation System-level Handling Mechanism

If academic misconduct of applicant institutions is identified during the accreditation process, the IQA Office and PRT shall truthfully record relevant information in the review report.

If Accredited Institutions are found to have made false statements in self-evaluation materials or any documents submitted to IAPUC, the ADC may take the following measures according to the severity of circumstances:

For institutions in the application stage: Terminate the accreditation process and impose a re-application restriction period of no less than 24 months;

For institutions with Provisional Accreditation: Revoke accreditation qualification and make public announcement;

For institutions with Accredited or Fully Accredited status: Immediately downgrade to Provisional Accreditation or directly revoke accreditation, and publish the result on the official IAPUC website.

If serious academic misconduct of public concern occurs in Accredited Institutions, the IQA Office has the right to launch a special review procedure, require the institution to submit explanatory reports within a specified period, and determine the necessity of special on-site visits.

IAPUC reserves the right to notify the educational competent authorities or quality assurance institutions of the institution's home country/region of institutions whose accreditation is revoked due to false statements or serious academic misconduct.

Article 19 Handling of Internal System Violations

If review experts are found to have violated ethical codes during the review process (such as disclosing confidential information, accepting improper benefits from institutions, or serious bias in review), IAPUC shall:

Immediately terminate their review qualification;

Remove them from the peer review expert database;

Assess the impact of their behaviors on accreditation results, and invalidate relevant review procedures and appoint new experts for re-review if necessary.

If procedural violations or ethical improprieties are identified in accreditation decision-making or appeal ruling processes, the IAPUC Council may launch a review of relevant decisions.

Chapter 7 Supplementary Provisions

Article 20 Institutional Commitment and Continuous Compliance

Institutions submitting IAPUC-IQA accreditation applications shall be deemed to have committed to complying with the academic ethics and moral standards specified in this specification.

Accredited Institutions shall submit a special report on academic ethics governance in the Annual Quality Monitoring Report, covering:

Annual statistics on academic misconduct reports and investigations (aggregated data with privacy protection);

Implementation status of annual academic ethics education and training;

Operational statistics of research ethics reviews;

Updates to ethical policies and systems.

Article 21 Specification Interpretation and Revision

This specification is interpreted by the IAPUC Quality Accreditation Committee.

IAPUC reserves the right to revise this specification in accordance with international developments in academic ethics and accreditation practices. Revised versions shall be released upon approval by the IAPUC Council with a reasonable transition period.

Article 22 Relationship with Other Normative Documents

This specification and the following documents constitute the unified IAPUC-IQA normative system:

Document	Relationship with This Specification
<i>IAPUC-IQA Accreditation Manual</i>	This specification refines the "Ethics and Compliance" clause under Standard 1 (Mission, Strategy and Governance) and serves as the ethical

	counterpart to Standard 7 (Social Responsibility and Impact) of the Accreditation Manual.
<i>IAPUC-IQA Academic Certification Quality Standards Manual</i>	This specification maintains logical consistency and dimensional correspondence with the chapters on research ethics, academic integrity and faculty ethics in the Academic Quality Standards Manual.
<i>IAPUC-IQA Accreditation Process Specification</i>	This specification provides ethical principle support for the chapters on expert management, conflict of interest, appeal and arbitration in the Process Specification.

In case of any inconsistency between the provisions of the above documents and this specification, this specification shall prevail.

Appendix: Academic Ethics Self-Evaluation Checklist

Institutions may conduct preliminary self-evaluation of academic ethics governance using the following checklist:

Dimension	Core Evaluation Questions	Yes/Partially/No	Improvement Actions Required
Ethics Organization	Has an independent Academic Ethics Committee been established?		
Ethics Policies	Have formal academic integrity policies and research ethics review systems been formulated?		
Reporting Mechanism	Have secure reporting channels and whistleblower protection systems been established?		
Ethics Education	Is academic ethics education incorporated into compulsory training for students and faculty induction?		
Research Ethics Review	Are all research studies involving human participants subject to ethical review?		

Conflict of Interest Management	Has a declaration system for conflicts of interest of administrators and academic leaders been established?		
Student Integrity	Are effective examination supervision and academic misconduct identification procedures in place?		
Social Ethical Responsibility	Are enrollment information and public publicity truthful and accurate?		
Misconduct Investigation	Have academic misconduct incidents occurred in the past three years, and were they investigated and handled in accordance with due procedures?		
Faculty Ethics	Has a faculty academic ethics code been formulated and incorporated into performance assessment?		

Document Approval

Role	Name/Position	Date
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