



Institutional Membership Application Guidelines

for EdTech Startups & Platforms Admission Standards

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Applicable to: Legally established private educational technology enterprises worldwide whose business includes, but is not limited to: Learning Management Systems (LMS), AI-driven educational applications, Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality (VR/AR) training platforms, adaptive learning systems, online course platforms, micro-credential platforms, educational data analytics services, and other digital solutions serving the private higher education sector.

Preamble: From Tools to Partners — Redefining EdTech in Quality Assurance

The International Association of Private Universities and Colleges (IAPUC) is the world's only multi-disciplinary quality assurance body dedicated exclusively to private higher education. As the sector undergoes a profound shift from scale-oriented expansion to quality-driven, connotation-focused development, the role of educational technology has never been more critical — nor more in need of rigorous oversight.

Superficial partnerships, where technology vendors supply tools without accountability for educational outcomes, are no longer acceptable. IAPUC has therefore undertaken a fundamental re-examination of how EdTech enterprises engage with our accredited institutions. Drawing upon the full suite of IAPUC regulatory instruments — including the *IQA Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) Accreditation Standards*, the *Supplementary Standards for Distance and Blended Learning Quality Assurance*, the *IQA Academic Quality Standards Manual*, the *IAPUC Digital Security and Privacy Regulations*, and the *IAPUC Academic Ethics and Integrity Code* — we have concluded that EdTech providers must transition from external vendors to integrated members of the quality assurance community.

This Final Edition of the EdTech Startups & Platforms Admission Standards consolidates and supersedes all prior versions. It establishes a rigorous, three-tier membership framework — **Co-Building Partner, Strategic Partner, and Senior**

Partner — that aligns institutional accreditation requirements with industry capabilities. The cornerstone of this framework is the **mandatory integration of relevant ISO management system certifications** as non-negotiable prerequisites for admission. Furthermore, it introduces a **quantifiable, verifiable "Substantive Contribution Assessment" for industry-education integration**, ensuring that partnerships between EdTech enterprises and IQA-accredited institutions are deep, accountable, and demonstrably beneficial to student learning and employability.

This is not merely an admission guideline. It is a declaration that quality in private higher education is indivisible — whether delivered by a professor in a classroom or an algorithm on a screen, the same rigorous standards apply.

Chapter 1: General Provisions

Article 1: Purpose and Scope

1.1 These Guidelines serve to:

- (a) Establish a clear, tiered, and rigorous admission framework for EdTech enterprises at various stages of development;
- (b) Ensure that all admitted EdTech enterprises meet baseline international standards for educational management, information security, and occupational health and safety;
- (c) Promote deep, verifiable, and sustainable industry-education integration between EdTech enterprises and IQA-accredited institutions;
- (d) Facilitate the alignment of educational technology products and services with the IQA accreditation framework, particularly in the domains of OBE implementation, learning outcomes assessment, and digital pedagogy;
- (e) Provide a transparent pathway for EdTech enterprises to progress from initial engagement to strategic leadership within the IAPUC global community.

1.2 These Guidelines apply to all private EdTech enterprises — whether for-profit or non-profit — whose primary business involves the development, deployment, or servicing of educational technology products or platforms for the higher education sector.

Article 2: Membership Tier Definitions

IAPUC classifies EdTech institutional membership into three progressive tiers. The tier structure is designed to accommodate enterprises at different stages of maturity while incentivizing continuous improvement and deeper engagement with the IQA quality framework.

Tier	Core Positioning	Typical Profile
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Co-Building Partner	Companion of nascent innovation.	Early-stage startups (Angel/Pre-A/Seed round) with a developed Minimum Viable Product (MVP). Seeking to validate products within authentic academic settings through structured interaction with the IAPUC community.
Strategic Partner	Enabler of industry solutions.	Established companies with market-recognized products and a solid base of institutional clients. Capable of providing strategic technical support to IQA-accredited institutions and demonstrating verified contributions to industry-education integration.
Senior Partner	Co-definer of global education quality.	Listed EdTech corporations, unicorn platforms, or recognized industry leaders with global reach and influence. Qualified to participate in the co-creation and revision of IAPUC digital education quality standards and to represent the Association in international policy dialogues.

Article 3: General Principles Applicable to All Tiers

Regardless of the tier sought, every EdTech applicant must demonstrate adherence to the following foundational principles:

- 1. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** The enterprise must be legally registered and in good standing in its jurisdiction of operation, with a clean record of tax compliance and no history of major regulatory sanctions within the preceding three years.
- 2. Educational Ethics and Integrity:** The enterprise's products, services, and business practices must not facilitate academic dishonesty, large-scale cheating, predatory data harvesting, or designs that exploit student vulnerabilities or promote addictive behavior. Products must align with the ethical principles set forth in the *IAPUC Academic Ethics and Integrity Code*.
- 3. Privacy and Data Protection:** The enterprise must maintain a comprehensive

privacy policy that meets the standards of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), and other applicable data protection laws. This policy must be publicly available and regularly updated.

4. Alignment with IAPUC Mission: The enterprise must demonstrate genuine alignment with the mission and core values of IAPUC — Rigor, Fairness, Transparency, Diversity, Continuous Improvement, and Social Responsibility — and commit to advancing quality in private higher education through its products and practices.

5. Commitment to Industry-Education Integration: The enterprise's product vision, business model, and operational practices must demonstrably support the integration of academic learning with industry practice, contributing to the enhancement of learner employability and career readiness.

Article 4: Progression Pathway

The typical progression pathway for an EdTech enterprise within the IAPUC membership framework is:

- 1. Application for Co-Building Partner** → Review and admission.
- 2. Upgrade to Strategic Partner** → After meeting all criteria for the higher tier, including additional ISO certifications and substantive industry-education integration contributions.
- 3. Upgrade to Senior Partner** → Upon achieving industry leadership, global reach, and demonstrable impact on IQA quality standards.

Progression is not automatic; each upgrade requires a formal application and a fresh review by the EdTech Expert Review Panel. Enterprises may also be directly invited to a higher tier at the discretion of the IAPUC Board of Directors or Accreditation Decision Committee (ADC) if their market standing and contributions warrant it.

Chapter 2: Mandatory ISO Certification Requirements

This Chapter establishes the cornerstone of IAPUC's rigorous admission control. In alignment with the IQA framework's commitment to internationally benchmarked standards, all EdTech applicants must hold or commit to obtaining specific ISO certifications. These certifications serve as objective, third-party validated evidence of an enterprise's capacity to manage educational quality, information security, and occupational health and safety.

Article 5: General Mandatory Certifications (All Tiers)

The following certifications are mandatory for all EdTech applicants, irrespective of

the membership tier sought:

1. ISO 21001:2018 (Educational Organizations Management Systems): This certification demonstrates that the enterprise has implemented a management system specifically designed for educational organizations, covering the design, development, and delivery of educational services, as well as the monitoring and continuous improvement of learner outcomes. It is the foundational certification for any organization seeking to engage substantively with the IQA framework.

Transitional Provision: An enterprise that has not yet obtained ISO 21001 certification at the time of application may be conditionally admitted, provided it submits a formal project plan and a signed contract with an accredited certification body, demonstrating a clear commitment to achieving certification within 12 months of admission. Failure to obtain the certification within this period shall result in suspension or termination of membership.

2. ISO/IEC 27001:2022 (Information Security, Cybersecurity and Privacy Protection): Given that EdTech platforms routinely process sensitive student personal data, learning behavior profiles, and institutional assessment records, this certification is a non-negotiable baseline for protecting data security. It ensures that the enterprise has implemented a robust Information Security Management System (ISMS) that meets global standards, consistent with the requirements of the *IAPUC Digital Security and Privacy Regulations*.

No transitional provision applies. This certification must be held at the time of application. Any enterprise that cannot demonstrate a valid, current ISO/IEC 27001 certification shall not be admitted.

Article 6: Tier-Specific Additional Certifications

In addition to the general mandatory certifications, applicants for each tier must satisfy the following additional requirements:

Admission Tier	Mandatory Additional Certifications	Compliance & Ethics Documentation
Co-Building Partner	ISO 29995:2021 (Education and learning services — Vocabulary and guidance for the application of ISO 21001), or, in the alternative, submission of an educational service compliance audit report issued by a third-party auditor formally recognized by IAPUC.	(i) An official declaration, signed by the Chief Executive Officer, confirming no major data breaches, educational ethics incidents, or regulatory sanctions within the preceding 12 months.(ii) Backend security monitoring logs or equivalent evidence supporting the

	This certification or audit ensures that the enterprise understands the terminology and operational framework of educational management systems.	declaration.
Strategic Partner	ISO 45001:2018 (Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems). This certification is required because Strategic Partners are expected to engage in collaborations involving physical settings — such as co-built training bases, joint university-enterprise laboratories, and on-campus technology deployment — where the occupational health and safety of students, faculty, and staff must be formally assured.	(i) A standardized institutional template for an <i>Intellectual Property Sharing and Protection Agreement</i> applicable to courses or technologies co-developed with higher education institutions.(ii) At least one fully executed and legally effective copy of such an agreement.
Senior Partner	(i) ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018 (Service Management System Requirements). This certification demonstrates that the enterprise manages its technology services with a structured, process-based approach that ensures consistent quality and continuous improvement.(ii) For Senior Partners whose products include AI-driven teaching assessment tools, adaptive learning	(i) The enterprise must establish an independent internal "Industry-Education Integration Ethics Committee." This committee shall include at least two external members who are serving Deans of Academic Affairs or Quality Representatives from IQA-accredited institutions. The committee shall provide annual written oversight on the educational suitability and ethical

	algorithms, or automated decision-making systems: an Algorithm Fairness and Anti-Bias Ethical Audit Report , issued by an independent external audit firm, covering the accuracy, fairness, and non-discriminatory design of the relevant algorithms.	implications of the enterprise's products and services.(ii) The committee's annual reports shall be submitted to the IAPUC Quality Assurance Committee.
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Article 7: Verification and Audit

All ISO certifications submitted in support of an application must:

- (a) Be issued by a certification body accredited by a national or international accreditation body (e.g., a member of the International Accreditation Forum, IAF);
- (b) Be current and valid at the time of application;
- (c) Cover the specific legal entity and operational scope relevant to the IAPUC membership application.

IAPUC reserves the right to independently verify the authenticity of any certification submitted. The submission of fraudulent or falsified certification documents shall result in permanent disqualification from IAPUC membership and public notification to all accredited institutions.

Chapter 3: Substantive Contribution Assessment for Industry-Education Integration

To dismantle the persistent barriers of superficial cooperation — "in name but not in depth, in form but not in substance" — IAPUC rejects the notion that a simple software procurement contract or a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding constitutes genuine industry-education integration. This Chapter establishes a multi-dimensional, tiered assessment framework that requires EdTech enterprises to provide verifiable evidence of substantive contributions across five core dimensions.

Article 8: The "Deep Coupling" Assessment Matrix

Assessment Dimension	Co-Building Partner	Strategic Partner	Senior Partner
1. Curriculum Co-Building &	Provide the syllabus for at	The co-developed course must be	Lead the formation of an

Knowledge Injection	least one Micro-credential course or Project-Based Learning (PBL) scheme co-developed with a higher education institution. Industry cases provided by the enterprise must constitute no less than 30% of the course content.	formally integrated into the institution's credit system. Pre- and post-test comparative data on student learning outcomes must be submitted, demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact.	"Industry Curriculum Alliance" with at least three IQA-accredited institutions to jointly develop curriculum standards for specific industries (e.g., AI, renewable energy, fintech). The standards must be formally recognized by the IAPUC Academic Committee.
2. Two-Way Faculty Mobility Mechanism	Establish a corporate mentor pool. Mentors must possess over three years of relevant industry experience and deliver no fewer than two lectures, workshops, or seminars per semester at partner institutions.	Host institutional faculty for in-service training in customized "Faculty Corporate Practice Positions." Annually, provide at least three on-site practice posts, each with a minimum duration of 60 learning hours.	Co-establish "Dual-Professional" professorship positions with partner institutions. Enterprise executives must take on substantive teaching or mentorship responsibilities, including guiding capstone projects or serving on thesis defense panels. Mentorship records shall be incorporated into IQA faculty audits.
3. Training Environment &	Provide lightweight SaaS-	Invest hardware or software	Establish a "Vocational Skill

Skill Certification	based training environment interfaces or simulation tools accessible to partner institutions.	resources to co-build "Intelligent Virtual Simulation Training Bases" within accredited institutions, with operational procedures aligned to ISO 45001 safety standards.	Digital Portrait" system that translates student training data into an industry-recognized competency radar chart. The system must be directly API-integrated with the HR screening systems of major global employers, enabling seamless flow of industry-education data.
4. Internship, Employment & Quality Tracking	Provide a precise internship position recommendation service driven by big data algorithms.	Build a "Two-Way Evaluation" platform where host employers submit quantitative evaluations of student interns based on IAPUC's Graduate Attributes (GA) standards at the conclusion of each internship period.	Publish an annual <i>Industry Talent Demand and Education Quality Alignment White Paper</i> . Anonymized industry-side employment data must be systematically fed back to IAPUC to inversely drive the refinement of accreditation standards and curriculum design guidelines.
5. Intellectual Property & Joint R&D	Clearly define the ownership of intellectual property generated from pilot collaborations in a written agreement.	Hold no fewer than three technology invention patents or software copyrights that are jointly filed with higher education	Establish a "Corporate Technology R&D Center Branch" physically located on the campus of an IQA-accredited institution. A

		institutions and directly relevant to the enterprise's educational technology products.	defined portion of the enterprise's R&D expenditure must be directed toward the intersection of foundational academic disciplines and applied industrial research. The enterprise must also jointly apply for nationally or internationally recognized industry-education integration projects.
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Article 9: Evaluation Process

- 1. Annual Self-Assessment:** Each EdTech member shall submit an annual self-assessment report addressing each of the five dimensions, with supporting evidence.
- 2. Peer Review:** The IAPUC EdTech Expert Review Panel shall review the self-assessments and may request additional evidence, conduct virtual or on-site verification, or interview partner institution representatives.
- 3. Rating:** The Panel shall assign a rating of "Compliant," "Conditionally Compliant," or "Non-Compliant" for each dimension. An overall rating of "Non-Compliant" for two consecutive assessment cycles shall trigger the dynamic exit mechanism under Article 13.

Chapter 4: Tiered Rights and Obligations

Article 10: Core Member Benefits

The benefits of IAPUC EdTech membership extend beyond conventional industry recognition. Admitted members gain a privileged position within the global IQA quality community.

Benefit Dimension	Co-Building Partner	Strategic Partner	Senior Partner

Brand Visibility	Listed in the IAPUC online EdTech Partners directory.	Directory listing with corporate logo, product profile, and a dedicated feature article on the IAPUC website.	Homepage rotating logo display on the IAPUC website; awarded the "IAPUC Senior EdTech Partner" digital badge for use in the enterprise's own marketing.
Resource Access	Access to IAPUC EdTech frontier reports and sectoral briefing papers.	Access to annual sector reports, draft IQA standards, and invitations to closed-door policy briefings.	Access to anonymized IQA accreditation data analysis reports; eligibility to co-publish industry whitepapers and research studies with IAPUC.
Market Access & Institutional Matchmaking	Invited to the annual "IAPUC Innovation Roadshow" to present products to accredited institutions.	Participation in exclusive "IAPUC Accredited Institution Technology Procurement Matchmaking" events. Receipt of an "Industry-Education Integration Technical Compliance Recommendation Letter" from IAPUC, providing a "Green Priority Channel" within institutional procurement processes.	Priority consideration as the official technology partner or exclusive platform sponsor for major IAPUC conferences and events. Direct facilitation of strategic partnerships with IQA-accredited institutions.

Standard Co-Creation & Governance	May attend open consultation sessions on IQA digital education standards.	Eligible to apply for membership in the IAPUC Digital Education Standards Working Group.	Appointed as a core drafting member of the Digital Education Standards Working Group, with direct input into the revision of IQA accreditation criteria related to digital pedagogy, virtual simulation, and AI ethics.
Capital & Investment Support	N/A	Referral opportunities to IAPUC's network of partner venture capital funds and education-focused investors.	Invitation to exclusive closed-door sessions at the "Global EdTech Investment Summit" and facilitated introductions to sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks active in education.

Article 11: Shared Obligations of All EdTech Members

1. Annual Compliance Reporting: Submit an annual *Corporate Education Compliance Self-Assessment Report* covering data privacy, product ethics, and industry-education integration contributions.

2. Data Protection and Confidentiality: Strictly protect all institutional and student data accessed through IAPUC relationships. Any data breach must be reported to IAPUC within 72 hours, in accordance with the *IAPUC Digital Security and Privacy Regulations*.

3. Continuous Product Improvement: Co-Building and Strategic Partners must demonstrate continuous iteration and improvement of their products. If business operations cease or products are discontinued for a period exceeding two consecutive years, membership shall be automatically terminated.

4. Ethical Conduct: Uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all dealings with IQA-accredited institutions, students, and faculty. Any violation of the *IAPUC Academic Ethics and Integrity Code* shall be grounds for immediate disciplinary action.

5. Accurate Representation: EdTech members must accurately represent their IAPUC membership tier in all external communications. Members must not imply that their products or services are "IQA-accredited" or "IAPUC-endorsed" unless such endorsement has been explicitly granted in writing by the Association.

Article 12: Specific Obligations Related to Industry-Education Integration

EdTech members at all tiers shall, commensurate with their capacity and tier, provide substantive support for industry-education integration, including but not limited to:

- Offering internship opportunities, corporate mentors, or joint research and development projects to IQA-accredited institutions;
- Aligning vocational skill certification systems offered through their platforms with IQA competency frameworks;
- Participating in IAPUC-facilitated dialogues between industry and academia on emerging skill needs and curriculum adaptation.

Article 13: Dynamic Exit Mechanism

To preserve the integrity and quality of the EdTech membership ecosystem, IAPUC enforces a rigorous dynamic exit mechanism:

1. Failure to Obtain Required Certifications: If a Co-Building Partner or Strategic Partner fails to obtain any ISO certification required for its tier within the stipulated transitional period (where applicable), its membership tier shall be downgraded or membership shall be terminated.

2. Persistent Non-Compliance in Industry-Education Integration: If an enterprise receives an overall rating of "Non-Compliant" in the Substantive Contribution Assessment for two consecutive annual cycles, IAPUC shall initiate the exit procedure.

3. Serious Violations: If an enterprise is found to have:

- (a) Submitted fraudulent or falsified ISO certifications or other application materials;
- (b) Committed a serious breach of student data privacy or institutional confidentiality;
- (c) Engaged in practices that systematically undermine academic integrity or exploit student vulnerabilities;
- (d) Been subject to major regulatory sanctions, criminal prosecution, or public

censure related to its business practices,

IAPUC shall, upon verification by the Quality Assurance Committee, immediately terminate the enterprise's membership, permanently blacklist the enterprise from future admission, and issue a global notification to all IQA-accredited institutions.

Chapter 5: Application and Approval Procedures

Article 14: Recommendation and Invitation System

1. Co-Building Partner: Admission operates under a **Recommendation System**. The applicant must be recommended by at least one of the following:

- (a) A Quality Representative of an IAPUC Institutional Member (Full Member or Accredited Member);
- (b) A current IAPUC Peer Review Expert in good standing.

The recommender must provide a written statement explaining the basis for their familiarity with the applicant's products, services, and commitment to educational quality.

2. Strategic Partner and Senior Partner: Admission operates under a **dual Invitation and Upgrade System**:

- (a) Direct invitation may be issued by the IAPUC Board of Directors, the Secretariat, or the Accreditation Decision Committee (ADC) to enterprises that demonstrably meet the tier criteria and whose market standing warrants accelerated admission;
- (b) Existing Co-Building Partners or Strategic Partners may apply for an upgrade once they have satisfied all criteria for the higher tier.

Article 15: Approval Process

1. Submission of Application: The applicant submits a completed *EdTech Membership Application Form* together with all required supporting documentation, including ISO certifications, evidence of industry-education integration contributions, and the recommendation letter (if applicable), via the IAPUC online portal.

2. Initial Screening by the Secretariat: The IAPUC Secretariat conducts an initial review within 15 working days to verify the completeness of the application and the prima facie validity of the submitted certifications.

3. Substantive Review by the EdTech Expert Review Panel: The application is referred to the EdTech Expert Review Panel, appointed by the IAPUC Quality Assurance Committee. The Panel conducts an in-depth review of the applicant's compliance with all tier-specific criteria, including the verification of ISO certifications, the assessment of industry-education integration evidence, and, where necessary, a

virtual interview with the applicant's leadership or a demonstration of the applicant's technology platform.

4. Decision: The Panel makes a recommendation to the IAPUC Board of Directors, which renders the final decision. The applicant shall be notified in writing within 45 days of the submission of a complete application.

5. Fee Payment and Activation: Upon approval, the applicant pays the first-year membership fee within 30 days. Membership takes effect upon confirmation of payment, and an electronic membership certificate is issued.

Chapter 6: Fee Structure

Tier	Annual Fee (USD)
Co-Building Partner	950
Strategic Partner	3,500
Senior Partner	8,000

Fees are payable annually in advance. The billing cycle aligns with the calendar year or the anniversary of the admission date. For new members admitted mid-year, the first-year fee is prorated based on the remaining months of the calendar year.

Chapter 7: Supplementary Provisions

Article 16: Transitional Arrangements for Existing Members

EdTech enterprises that were admitted to membership under any prior version of these Guidelines shall, within **12 months** of the Effective Date of this Final Edition, fulfill all mandatory ISO certification requirements corresponding to their current tier and pass the first Substantive Contribution Assessment for Industry-Education Integration. Failure to comply within this transitional period shall result in the initiation of the dynamic exit mechanism.

Article 17: Relationship with Other IAPUC Documents

These Guidelines operate in conjunction with:

- The IAPUC Constitution;
- The IAPUC Membership Eligibility and Admission Standards;
- The IQA Accreditation Manual;

- The IQA Supplementary Standards for Distance and Blended Learning Quality Assurance;
- The IAPUC Digital Security and Privacy Regulations;
- The IAPUC Academic Ethics and Integrity Code;
- The IAPUC-IQA Accreditation Mark Usage and Brand Management Code.

Article 18: Interpretation and Amendment

These Guidelines are interpreted by the IAPUC Board of Directors. IAPUC reserves the right to amend these Guidelines in response to the evolution of ISO international standards, emerging educational technologies, and global best practices in industry-education integration. Amendments shall take effect upon approval by the Board of Directors and shall apply to all applications submitted after the effective date of the amendment.

Article 19: Effective Date

This Final Edition takes effect on **January 1, 2026**.

Approval

Role	Name / Title	Date
Prepared by	IAPUC Industry-Education Integration & EdTech Quality Working Group	May 2026
Reviewed by	IAPUC Quality Assurance Committee	Pending
Approved by	IAPUC Board of Directors	Pending

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