



INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION STANDARDS – EDTECH START-UPS AND PLATFORMS

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Review Cycle: Compliance review every 12 months; full policy review every three years

Responsible Body: IAPUC Membership Committee (in conjunction with the Technology and Innovation Committee)

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Related Documents: IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-001 (General Provisions); IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-004 (AI Guidelines); IAPUC/ETH/DOC-2026-002 (Digital Security and Privacy Regulations); IAPUC/FIN/DOC-2026-002 (Fee Implementation Rules); IAPUC/DEV/DOC-2026-004 (Major Change Reporting Guide)

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (IAPUC)

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION STANDARDS – EDTECH START-UPS AND PLATFORMS

Article 1: Purpose and Scope

1.1 These Standards are established pursuant to Article 6 of the *Membership Qualification and Admission Standards (General Provisions)* (IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-001). They define the specific eligibility criteria, tiered partnership structures, documentary requirements, and evaluation procedures for educational technology companies, platforms, and service providers seeking Associate or Full Membership in IAPUC.

1.2 These Standards apply to all organisations that:

- Develop, distribute, or operate technology-based products or services designed for educational delivery, administration, or assessment;
- Provide digital learning platforms, learning management systems (LMS), adaptive learning tools, assessment engines, student information systems, or AI-powered educational applications;
- Offer infrastructure or intermediary services that enable or enhance educational provision by IAPUC member institutions.

1.3 These Standards **do not apply** to institutions that merely use EdTech tools for their own programme delivery (which fall under A/B/C categories). They apply exclusively to organisations for which educational technology constitutes their **primary business offering**.

1.4 Successful admission at any tier grants **Full Member** status, which qualifies the organisation to apply for IQA certification (per the *IQA Accreditation Process Regulations*). Full Membership does not itself confer Accredited Member status.

Article 2: Definitions

2.1 **EdTech (Educational Technology)**: Any technology-based product, service, or platform designed to facilitate, enhance, or assess teaching, learning, administration, or student support in educational settings.

2.2 **Minimum Viable Product (MVP)**: A functional version of a product with sufficient features to be deployed for real educational use, albeit not yet feature-complete or fully scaled.

2.3 **Algorithmic Accountability**: The obligation of EdTech providers to ensure that their AI-driven or algorithm-based systems operate without unlawful bias, make transparent decisions, and are subject to independent ethical review.

2.4 **Data Sovereignty**: The principle that educational data generated by or through EdTech platforms remains under the ownership and control of the educational institution or student, with the provider acting solely as a data processor under defined terms.

Article 3: General Eligibility Criteria

Applicant organisations must satisfy all basic conditions set forth in Article 5 of the General Provisions, and in addition, meet the following specific requirements:

3.1 Legal Status and Registration:

- Legally incorporated in its home jurisdiction.
- Where the organisation processes data of individuals in the EU, US, or China, it must maintain compliance mechanisms for GDPR, CCPA, and PIPL respectively (per the *Digital Security and Privacy Regulations*, IAPUC/ETH/DOC-2026-002).

3.2 Core Business:

- At least 60% of annual revenue or operational focus must derive from educational technology products or services.
- A clear product roadmap with demonstrable educational application and user value proposition.

3.3 Operational Track Record:

- **Partner tier applicants:** Minimum 6 months of post-MVP operational history.
- **Strategic Partner tier applicants:** Minimum 3 years of continuous operation.
- **Senior Partner tier applicants:** Minimum 5 years of continuous operation with established global presence.

3.4 User Base:

- **Partner tier:** At least one reference client institution actively using the product.
- **Strategic Partner tier:** Serving no fewer than 10 educational institutions across at least two countries or regions.
- **Senior Partner tier:** Serving no fewer than 50 educational institutions across at least five countries or regions.

Article 4: Tiered Partnership Structure and Mandatory Certifications

EdTech applicants are admitted at one of three partnership tiers, reflecting their maturity, compliance depth, and strategic alignment with IAPUC's mission.

4.1 Partner Tier (Entry / Start-up)

Criterion	Requirement
Minimum Product	Fully functional MVP deployed with at least one client.
Governance	Basic data protection policy and privacy notice.
Mandatory ISO Certifications	ISO 21001 (Educational organisations management system – essential for demonstrating education-specific quality management). ISO 27001 (Information security management – non-negotiable for all data-handling entities).
AI/Algorithm Governance	Self-declaration of algorithmic fairness and transparency; commitment to external audit within 24

	months of membership.
Data Protection Officer	A designated responsible person (may be part-time or outsourced).
Fees	Application fee: \$1,500; Annual membership: \$750–\$1,500 (based on revenue).

Pathway Condition: Partner tier members must progress to Strategic Partner status within 24 months of admission; failure to do so triggers a membership review.

4.2 Strategic Partner Tier

Criterion	Requirement
Minimum Product	Full-featured platform with proven scalability and interoperability (e.g., LTI, xAPI, or equivalent standards compliance).
Governance	Published ethics framework, transparent pricing, and service-level agreements; dedicated compliance officer.
Mandatory ISO Certifications	All Partner tier certifications, plus ISO 29995 (Learning services outside formal education – demonstrates competence in non-formal learning contexts). ISO 45001 (Occupational health and safety – for staff welfare and remote work policies).
AI/Algorithm Governance	External independent ethical audit of AI algorithms completed within 12 months of admission (following the <i>AI-Assisted Teaching and Assessment Accreditation Guidelines</i> , IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-004). Results must be submitted to the Technology and Innovation Committee.
Data Protection Officer	Full-time DPO with recognised professional certification (e.g., CIPP/E, CIPM, or equivalent).
Fees	Application fee: \$2,500; Annual membership: \$2,000–\$4,000 (based on revenue and user count).

Privileges: Priority invitation to IAPUC EdTech Summit; eligibility to serve on the Technology and Innovation Committee; co-branding opportunities in IAPUC publications.

4.3 Senior Partner Tier

Criterion	Requirement
Minimum Product	Comprehensive platform suite with AI integration, advanced analytics, and proven interoperability with major LMS platforms.
Governance	Fully independent ethics advisory board; published annual transparency report on data usage and algorithmic outcomes.
Mandatory ISO Certifications	All Strategic Partner tier certifications, plus ISO 20000 (IT service management – ensures enterprise-grade service delivery and incident response).
AI/Algorithm Governance	External independent ethical audit repeated every 24 months ; results published in summary form on the company's website.
Data Protection Officer	Full-time DPO with at least 8 years of relevant experience.
Industry-Education Integration	Demonstrable track record of co-designing curricula with educational institutions; documented employer feedback loops; evidence of graduate skills impact.
Fees	Application fee: \$3,500; Annual membership: \$4,000–\$8,000 (based on revenue and user count).

Privileges: Ex-officio advisory role to the Expert Advisory Committee; featured case studies in IAPUC research publications; prime exhibition space at IAPUC global events.

Article 5: AI Algorithm External Independent Ethical Audit Requirements

5.1 Audit Scope: For Strategic and Senior Partner applicants, the external ethical audit must cover at least the following dimensions:

- **Fairness and bias:** Statistical analysis of algorithmic outcomes across protected characteristics (e.g., race, gender, socio-economic background, disability).
- **Transparency and explainability:** Degree to which algorithmic decisions can be understood by end users (students, educators, administrators).

- **Data privacy and consent:** Compliance with data minimisation principles and lawful processing bases.
- **Human oversight:** Mechanisms for "human-in-the-loop" review of automated decisions, as required by the *AI-Assisted Teaching and Assessment Accreditation Guidelines* (IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-004).

5.2 Auditor Qualifications: Audits must be conducted by independent third-party organisations with demonstrable expertise in AI ethics, algorithm auditing, and educational technology. A whitelist of approved auditors is maintained by the Technology and Innovation Committee.

5.3 Audit Frequency:

- Strategic Partners: Initial audit within 12 months of admission; renewal every 24 months.
- Senior Partners: Initial audit within 6 months of admission; renewal every 24 months.

5.4 Consequences of Non-Compliance: Failure to submit a satisfactory audit report within the prescribed timeframe may result in suspension of membership benefits or downgrade to a lower tier.

Article 6: Industry-Education Integration Assessment Matrix

All EdTech applicants, particularly those seeking Strategic or Senior Partner status, must complete a self-assessment against the following five dimensions. A minimum score of 60 out of 100 is required for Strategic Partner status; 80 for Senior Partner status.

Dimension	Weight (%)	Assessment Criteria
Curriculum Co-Design	25%	Evidence that educational institutions contribute to product design; documented feedback loops; faculty advisory panels.
Skills Alignment	20%	Product features demonstrably map to employability skills, industry standards, or occupational competency frameworks.
Learning Outcomes	20%	Data (quantitative or qualitative) showing

Impact		improved student learning outcomes, completion rates, or skill acquisition.
Institutional Partnership Depth	20%	Nature and longevity of partnerships; co-authored research; joint publications.
Innovation and R&D	15%	Investment in research and development; contributions to EdTech thought leadership; patent or IP portfolio.

Article 7: Special Provisions for AI-Intensive Products

7.1 Where an EdTech product includes generative AI capabilities (e.g., AI tutors, automated essay marking, personalised learning paths), applicants must provide additional documentation on:

- Training data provenance and consent.
- Hallucination mitigation strategies.
- Content moderation policies (particularly for age-appropriate educational material).
- Mechanisms for student appeal against automated grading or placement decisions.

7.2 The *IQA AI-Assisted Teaching and Assessment Accreditation Guidelines* (IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-004) shall apply mutatis mutandis to the use of such tools in IAPUC member contexts.

Article 8: Data Protection, Privacy, and Security

8.1 All EdTech applicants must comply with the *Digital Security and Privacy Regulations* (IAPUC/ETH/DOC-2026-002) and the *IAPUC Privacy Policy* (IAPUC/ETH/DOC-2026-003). Specific requirements include:

- Designation of a data protection officer at the appropriate tier level.
- Data processing agreements that clarify data ownership, processing purposes, retention periods, and sub-processor arrangements.
- Implementation of data minimisation and purpose limitation principles.
- Incident response protocols for data breaches, with notification to the IAPUC Secretariat within 48 hours of a confirmed breach (per the *Risk Assessment and Management Interim Provisions*, IAPUC/ETH/DOC-2026-004).

8.2 For organisations processing data of individuals in multiple jurisdictions, compliance with all applicable data protection regimes (GDPR, CCPA, PIPL, etc.) is required. Conflict resolution among regimes shall follow the hierarchy established in the IAPUC Privacy Policy.

Article 9: Application and Evaluation Procedure

9.1 **Documentary Submission:** In addition to the general application forms required under the General Provisions, applicants must submit:

- Product description and technical architecture overview.
- Client reference list and case studies.
- ISO certification evidence (or a binding timeline for achieving certification, for applicants from LDCs or with special circumstances).
- Data protection impact assessment (if applicable).
- AI ethics self-assessment and (for Strategic/Senior applicants) external audit results or a commitment schedule.
- Industry-education integration self-assessment matrix (completed).

9.2 **Technical Verification:**

- The Technology and Innovation Committee shall conduct a technical verification, which may include platform demonstration, security architecture review, and interviews with key product engineers.
- For AI-intensive applicants, a separate algorithmic fairness review may be commissioned.

9.3 **On-Site or Remote Assessment:**

- For Strategic and Senior Partner applicants, a verification visit to the organisation's headquarters or main development centre shall be conducted, with particular attention to data governance practices, development workflows, and compliance culture.

9.4 **Decision Timeline:** The full evaluation process, from receipt of complete documents to Board decision, shall not exceed ninety working days.

Article 10: Fees and Financial Provisions

10.1 Fees are determined in accordance with the *IQA Accreditation Application, Accreditation, Annual and On-Site Review Fee Implementation Rules* (IAPUC/FIN/DOC-2026-002).

10.2 **Start-up Relief:** EdTech start-ups with fewer than 20 employees and less than \$500,000 in annual revenue may apply for:

- A 50% reduction on the application fee.
- A 30% reduction on annual membership fees for the first two years.

- Extended compliance timelines (up to 18 months) for obtaining ISO certifications.

10.3 LDC Relief: Organisations headquartered in Least Developed Countries (as defined by the UN) shall receive a 30%–50% reduction on both application and annual fees, and may negotiate extended ISO compliance timelines.

Article 11: Continuing Obligations and Upgrade Path

11.1 Upon admission, all EdTech members shall:

- Notify the Secretariat of any material change to product features, data processing practices, or ownership within 30 days (per the *Annual Information Disclosure and Major Change Reporting Guide*, IAPUC/DEV/DOC-2026-004).
- Submit an annual compliance report to the Technology and Innovation Committee, covering ISO certification renewal, AI audit status, and data breach incidents (if any).
- Participate in IAPUC's annual membership data update and fee renewal by 31 January each year.

11.2 Upgrade from Partner to Strategic Partner:

- Partner tier members may apply for upgrade after 12 months of continuous membership.
- Upgrade requires documented progress in user base, ISO certifications, and AI governance maturity.
- A technical verification visit shall be conducted prior to upgrade approval.

11.3 Upgrade from Strategic to Senior Partner:

- Strategic Partners may apply for upgrade after 24 months of continuous membership.
- Upgrade requires achievement of all ISO certifications, completion of at least one external AI audit cycle, and demonstrable contribution to IAPUC's strategic objectives.

11.4 Downgrade and Suspension:

- Failure to progress from Partner to Strategic within 24 months triggers a membership review.
- Lapse of ISO certification beyond a 90-day grace period results in suspension of membership benefits.
- Serious non-compliance with data protection or AI ethics standards may result in immediate suspension pending investigation.

Article 12: Supplementary Provisions

12.1 Interpretation: These Standards shall be interpreted by the Membership Committee in consultation with the Technology and Innovation Committee.

12.2 Amendment: Amendments shall be proposed by at least three Directors and adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Board of Directors.

12.3 **Effective Date:** These Standards take effect from 24 July 2026.

Adoption and Promulgation

This document was approved by the IAPUC Board of Directors at its first plenary session of the 2026 term.

Chair of the Board: _____

Secretariat Filing Reference: IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-005

Date of Promulgation: 24 July 2026

Appendix A: Quick Reference – Tier Comparison

Feature	Partner (Start-up)	Strategic Partner	Senior Partner
Min. Operational History	6 months	3 years	5 years
Min. Client Institutions	1	10	50
ISO 21001	✓	✓	✓
ISO 27001	✓	✓	✓
ISO 29995	—	✓	✓
ISO 45001	—	✓	✓
ISO 20000	—	—	✓
External AI Audit	Commitment within 24 mo	Within 12 mo	Within 6 mo; repeated every 24 mo
Full-time DPO	Optional	Required	Required (8+ yrs exp)
Industry-Education Integration Score	N/A	≥60/100	≥80/100

Application Fee (USD)	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$3,500
Annual Fee Range (USD)	\$750–1,500	\$2,000–4,000	\$4,000–8,000
Upgrade Timeline	Within 24 mo to Strategic	24 mo to Senior	N/A (top tier)

Appendix B: Required ISO Certifications – Explanatory Notes

ISO Standard	Description	Relevance to EdTech
ISO 21001	Educational organisations management system	Demonstrates education-sector awareness beyond generic IT management.
ISO 27001	Information security management	Essential for protecting student and institutional data.
ISO 29995	Learning services outside formal education	Covers non-traditional educational delivery (corporate training, adult learning).
ISO 45001	Occupational health and safety	Applies to staff welfare, remote work policies, and development environments.
ISO 20000	IT service management	Enterprise-grade service delivery, incident response, and continuous improvement.