



INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION STANDARDS – HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Document No.: IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-003

Version: V.1.1

Effective Date: 24 July 2025

Review Cycle: Biennial review, or immediate review upon major national vocational education policy adjustments

Responsible Body: IAPUC Membership Committee (in consultation with the Standards and Accreditation Committee)

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION STANDARDS – HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Document No.: IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-003

Version: V.1.1

Effective Date: 24 July 2025

Review Cycle: Biennial review, or immediate review upon major national vocational education policy adjustments

Responsible Body: IAPUC Membership Committee (in consultation with the Standards and Accreditation Committee)

Associated Documents: IAPUC/MEM/DOC-2026-001 (General Provisions); IAPUC/FIN/DOC-2026-002 (Fee Guidelines); IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-001 (OBE Standards)

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (IAPUC)

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION STANDARDS – HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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, documentary requirements, and evaluation procedures for post-secondary vocational education institutions seeking Associate or Full Membership in IAPUC.

1.2 These Standards apply to all legally recognised higher vocational education providers that offer diplomas, advanced certificates, or professional qualifications at

Levels 4–6 of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) or equivalent national frameworks.

1.3 Successful completion of these Standards qualifies the institution for **Full Member** status, which constitutes the statutory prerequisite for applying for IQA accreditation (per the *IQA Accreditation Process Regulations*). Full Membership does not itself confer Accredited Member status; separate IQA certification is required for that upgrade.

Article 2: Definitions

2.1 Higher Vocational Education (HVE): Post-secondary education that primarily aims to equip students with practical, technical, or professional skills for direct entry into specific occupations or industries. It is distinguished from academic higher education by its stronger emphasis on work-based learning, industry-recognised certifications, and applied assessment methods.

2.2 Industry-Integrated Curriculum: A programme of study in which a substantial portion (no less than 30% of total credit hours) is delivered through workplace placements, simulated professional environments, or projects commissioned by industry partners.

2.3 Dual Professional Practitioners: Teaching staff who concurrently hold substantive professional roles in their respective industries and maintain a formal teaching appointment at the institution.

Article 3: General Eligibility Criteria

Applicant institutions 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 Recognition:

- The institution must be lawfully established and registered as a higher vocational or professional training provider in its home jurisdiction.
- Its qualifications must be recognised for employment or further study purposes by the competent national or regional authority.
- Where the institution operates via franchise or validation arrangements, the awarding body's accreditation status must be disclosed.

3.2 Programme Portfolio:

- The institution must offer at least two distinct vocational programmes at post-secondary level, each with a defined occupational outcome.
- Each programme must have a published curriculum that specifies learning outcomes, practical skill components, and assessment methods.
- Programmes should align with national or international occupational standards where applicable (e.g., European Qualifications Framework, national vocational qualification frameworks).

3.3 Student Enrolment:

- A minimum of 150 actively enrolled students in credit-bearing programmes at the time of application (waived for newly established institutions with approved accreditation roadmaps).

Article 4: Specific Quality Standards for Vocational Education

Applicants must demonstrate robust performance across the following five domains, with evidence submitted in the application dossier.

4.1 Governance and Institutional Capacity

- A governing board or advisory council with meaningful industry representation (at least 30% of members from relevant business or professional sectors).
- A documented strategic plan that addresses institutional sustainability, market positioning, and responsiveness to labour market changes.
- Transparent admission, progression, and certification policies.

4.2 Curriculum and Pedagogical Delivery

- **Outcome-Based Design:** All programmes shall articulate clear Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) and Graduate Attributes (GAs), mapped to industry competency frameworks, in accordance with the *IQA OBE Accreditation Standards* (IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-001).
- **Practical Skills Component:** At least 40% of instructional time must be dedicated to laboratory work, workshop practice, clinical placements, studio work, or simulated professional environments.
- **Industry Integration:** Each programme must have formal partnerships with no fewer than five relevant enterprises or professional bodies, ensuring input into curriculum design, guest lecturing, and student placement.
- **Pedagogical Methods:** Teaching methodologies shall emphasise active learning, problem-based learning, and competency-based progression rather than purely didactic lectures.

4.3 Faculty and Professional Staff

- **Academic Qualifications:** At least 60% of full-time teaching staff must hold a master's degree or higher in their teaching discipline.
- **Industry Experience:** At least 50% of teaching staff must possess a minimum of three years of relevant full-time industry experience outside academia (Dual Professional Practitioners).
- **Professional Certifications:** Where programmes lead to regulated occupations (e.g., healthcare, engineering technology, accounting), a sufficient proportion of

faculty must hold current professional licenses or certifications in those fields.

- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** The institution must maintain a documented CPD policy requiring all faculty to update their industry knowledge through annual externships, conference attendance, or professional recertification.

4.4 Facilities and Learning Resources

- Dedicated workshop, laboratory, or simulation facilities that are current, safe, and of sufficient capacity to accommodate enrolled cohorts.

- Equipment must reflect contemporary industry standards; a replacement and upgrade cycle must be documented.

- Library and digital resources must include up-to-date professional standards, codes of practice, and industry-relevant databases.

- For online or hybrid vocational programmes, the technological infrastructure must support remote practical skills demonstration and assessment (referencing the *Distance and Blended Learning Quality Supplementary Standards*, IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-002).

4.5 Student Support and Progression

- **Admissions:** Clear and equitable admission criteria, with recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes compliant with the *Credit Transfer and RPL Guidelines* (IAPUC/QS/DOC-2026-005).

- **Career Services:** A dedicated career guidance and placement office that maintains employer networks and tracks graduate employment outcomes.

- **Pastoral Care:** Accessible academic advising, mental health support, and financial counselling services adapted to the vocational student demographic.

- **Retention and Completion:** Documented strategies to monitor student progress, identify at-risk students, and improve retention rates.

Article 5: Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

5.1 The institution shall maintain a functional internal quality assurance (IQA) system that includes:

- Regular programme reviews (at least once every three years) involving external industry assessors.

- Annual student satisfaction surveys and employer satisfaction surveys.

- A systematic process for addressing feedback and closing the loop on identified shortcomings.

5.2 The institution must submit annual data on graduate employment rates (within six months of graduation) and employer satisfaction, disaggregated by programme.

5.3 Compliance with applicable health and safety regulations, particularly for workshop and laboratory environments, is mandatory. Relevant ISO certifications (e.g., ISO 45001 for occupational health and safety) are strongly encouraged.

Article 6: Application and Evaluation Procedure

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

- A detailed prospectus or academic catalogue for all vocational programmes.
- Evidence of industry partnerships (memoranda of understanding, placement agreements, advisory board minutes).
- A faculty roster with qualifications, industry experience, and professional certifications.
- A facilities inventory with photographs and maintenance schedules.
- The most recent external inspection or audit report (if any) from a national accreditation or regulatory body.

6.2 **Verification Visit:** A remote or on-site verification visit shall be conducted by the Membership Committee, with particular attention to:

- Inspection of practical training facilities and equipment.
- Interviews with industry partners and employer representatives.
- Observation of teaching sessions (both theoretical and practical).
- Review of student assessment records and work placement logs.

6.3 **Specialised Assessors:** At least one member of the evaluation team shall possess substantial experience in vocational education or professional training, ensuring informed judgement of the institution's practical and industry-facing components.

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

Article 7: Fees and Financial Provisions

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

7.2 For vocational institutions with significant community service or non-profit missions, the Membership Committee may recommend partial fee waivers, subject to Board approval.

7.3 Institutions headquartered in Least Developed Countries (as defined by the UN) shall receive a 30%–50% reduction on both application and annual fees.

Article 8: Continuing Obligations and Upgrades

8.1 Upon admission as a Full Member, the institution shall:

- Notify the Secretariat of any major change to its programme portfolio, ownership, or facilities within 30 days, as per the *Annual Information Disclosure and Major Change Reporting Guide* (IAPUC/DEV/DOC-2026-004).
- Participate in the annual membership data update and fee renewal by 31 January each year.
- Maintain its industry partnership portfolio at the required level (no fewer than five active partners per programme).

8.2 **Pathway to Accreditation:** Full Members meeting these Standards may proceed to apply for IQA certification. The IQA accreditation review will include a deeper audit of the quality assurance and outcomes assessment systems, building upon the foundational compliance established at the membership stage.

8.3 **Downgrade and Reinstatement:** Failure to meet continuing obligations may result in downgrade to Associate status or termination of membership per Article 17 of the General Provisions. Reinstatement requires a fresh application and payment of all arrears.

Article 9: Supplementary Provisions

9.1 **Interpretation:** These Standards shall be interpreted by the Membership Committee in consultation with the Standards and Accreditation Committee.

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

9.3 **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-2026-003

Date of Promulgation: 24 July 2026

Appendix: Key Indicator Reference Table for Evaluators

Assessment Domain	Weight (%)	Key Evidence Required
-------------------	------------	-----------------------

Governance & Strategy	15%	Industry representation on board, strategic plan, financial sustainability
Curriculum & Delivery	30%	OBE mapping, practical skills % ($\geq 40\%$), industry partnerships (≥ 5 per programme)
Faculty & Staff	20%	% postgraduate qualifications ($\geq 60\%$), % dual practitioners ($\geq 50\%$), CPD policy
Facilities & Resources	20%	Workshop/lab safety, equipment modernity, replacement cycle, library resources
Student Support & Outcomes	15%	Career services, graduate employment rate tracking, student satisfaction surveys
Total	100%	