Orientation for new IAAC members
on how IAAC works

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AVAILABILITY

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1. Introduction

This brochure is intended to be a quick overview of IAAC and how it works. It is our hope that it will help new members and others to better understand the organization and encourage member participation and contributions. In so doing, we hope members will enjoy all the advantages and benefits of membership in IAAC.

This brochure explains in everyday language what IAAC is, what it does and how it is organized and managed. It is purposefully short, with references to the formal documentation in the IAAC web site.

2. What is IAAC?

The Inter American Accreditation Cooperation is the association of accreditation bodies in the Americas.

Its main purpose is to foster accreditation in the region.

IAAC was created in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1996 when a number of accreditation bodies in the Americas signed a Memorandum of Understanding.   It became a legal entity based in Mexico in 2000. The basic rules of the organization are described in its Bylaws. A comprehensive set of documents describe how IAAC conducts its activities. See the Documents section of the IAAC website, www.iaac.org.mx

3. What does IAAC do?

IAAC provides the forum for accreditation bodies to demonstrate their competence. When accreditation bodies demonstrate that they meet all the requirements of the relevant international standards and demonstrate their competence to their peers, they are admitted to multi-lateral recognition agreements (called arrangements) and become signatories.

IAAC is recognized by the relevant international organizations (ILAC and IAF) as the group that represents the accreditation bodies in the Americas region. In addition, the

relevant international organizations (ILAC and IAF) recognize that IAAC arrangements are valid and equivalent to those of other regions. That means that when an accreditation body signs an IAAC arrangement, its competence is recognized internationally.

IAAC provides training to help its accreditation body members in understanding and applying the requirements to join the arrangements and for the personnel of its members to update and improve their knowledge.

IAAC goals are in Chapter 2 of the Bylaws.

4. Who can join IAAC?

Any accreditation body established (or in process) in any country in the Americas may join IAAC if it operates (or intends to operate) according to relevant international standards and practices. In addition, IAAC welcomes a wide range of other interested parties and stakeholders. See Chapter 4 of the Bylaws.

5. How is IAAC structured?

IAAC has a General Assembly that, as its highest authority, takes all substantive decisions, and an Executive Committee that manages the operations and implements IAAC policies. There are 3 Committees (multilateral arrangement, technical, and management committees) and 7 Subcommittees that conduct its technical work. In addition, there is a Stakeholders Committee. The Executive Secretariat handles day to day operations and supports IAAC activities. Refer to the Bylaws for further information.

6. What do committees do and who may join?

The *Executive Committee* is responsible for advancing the objectives, goals, and tasks of the IAAC, and to implement its policy and administration.   It deals with issues that arise from the work of the Committees and other more general topics such as IAAC relationship with IAF and ILAC, liaison activities, economic and financial issues, etc.   Its membership includes the chair, vice chair and treasurer of IAAC as well as the chairs and vice chairs of its committees and subcommittees and representatives of IAAC associate members and stakeholders.

The *MLA Committee* (MLAC) is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the IAAC arrangement. It is open to all members, but only full members are allowed to vote. Within the MLAC, the MLA Group (MLAG) makes decisions relative to the acceptance of new signatories and related issues. The members of the MLAG are the

accreditation bodies that have signed one or more arrangements. The *Peer Evaluators' Management Subcommittee* also operates under the MLAC and serves to provide support to IAAC activities related to training, selection and management of the peer evaluators.

The *Technical Committee* (TC) coordinates the work of its subcommittees and addresses horizontal issues that cut across all specific accreditation. Its members are the chair and vice chair of the committee, and the chairs and vice chairs of its subcommittees. The TC has 3 subcommittees as follows:

The *Laboratory Subcommittee* addresses technical issues related to the accreditation of laboratories.

The Certification Subcommittee addresses technical issues related to the accreditation of all types of certification bodies.

The *Inspection Subcommittee* addresses technical issues related to the accreditation of inspection bodies.

The *Management Committee* coordinates the work of its subcommittees and addresses horizontal issues that cut across all management activities. Its members are the chair and vice chair of the committee and the chairs and vice chairs of its subcommittees. The MC has 3 subcommittees as follows:

The *Documentation Subcommittee* provides support to IAAC related to documentation.

The *Training Subcommittee* plans, organizes and manages training activities.

The *Promotions Subcommittee* plans, organizes and manages promotion activities.

The *Stakeholders Subcommittee* is comprised of stakeholder members that have signed the IAAC memorandum of understanding.

The terms of reference for all these committees and subcommittees describe their responsibilities and scopes of work and are available in the IAAC website. **Members are encouraged to participate in the work of all subcommittees.**

7. How do committees work?

Committees and subcommittees typically meet once a year, in conjunction with the annual General Assembly. Work, including information sharing, is conducted throughout the year by email. Committee work is conducted in English and Spanish (with simultaneous interpretation provided) and most documents are in English and Spanish.

The Executive Committee meets twice a year. All committees meet at least once a year in conjunction with the General Assembly and, on occasion, may also meet mid-year.

The work is done in a participatory manner, and contributions from all members are encouraged and necessary. When discussing issues and documents, the goal is reaching consensus but, at times, proposals require formal/written comments and voting.

As an example of the work of groups, the subcommittees discuss international requirements and how best to implement them. IAAC courses and seminars are coordinated by the Training Subcommittee and take place during the year in different locations. The Promotions Subcommittee regularly publishes the IAAC Newsletter.

Each committee and subcommittee has a work plan that is updated annually and is available in the members only part of the IAAC website.

The decisions and agreements reached during meetings (and, if necessary, their rationale) are recorded in short statements as resolutions. PR 001 provides more information on resolutions and is available on the IAAC website.

The resolutions of each group provide a comprehensive overview of what committees have done in the past and are available in the members-only part of the IAAC website.

8. **How do I join a committee?**

Members are able and encouraged to join, participate and contribute to the work of IAAC committees.

Before joining, you should review the terms of reference of the group you are interested in, including its membership rules. You will learn, in the terms of reference, what the functions of the group are. You may also want to find out what the group has done in the past by reading the past resolutions.

The terms of reference for each committee outline which positions or individuals are eligible for committee membership. If you would like to join a committee simply notify the Chair of the group with a copy to the IAAC Secretary.

9. What are my obligations regarding IAAC work?

Formal rights and obligations of IAAC members are in the Bylaws and the terms of reference of each committee and subcommittee.

Active participation and contribution to the work of IAAC in the General Assembly, committees, and work groups is a right that can be quite enriching. **Members realize the full value of IAAC membership when they engage in its work and interact with their peers.**

IAAC members have an obligation to vote (and submit comments) in a timely manner for proposals and documents that advance the work and goals of IAAC. Voting is conducted at the General Assembly and electronically. The IAAC Secretary manages the voting process. For electronic voting, you will receive a notification with the information on the relevant document or issue and a deadline. It is vital that all members send in their ballot on time.

10. Training

IAAC offers a wide variety of training to its members. The Training Subcommittee conducts periodic surveys to determine the members' training needs. Training offered by IAAC is often carried out in cooperation with external bodies. IAAC members also provide support for the training activities in the form of instructors, organizational support, hosting, etc. For information on the types of training that may be organized, such as courses, internships, consultancies, and others, please refer to the IAAC website. You will also find there a list of training offered and scheduled.

11. How is IAAC financed?

IAAC members pay an annual fee that is approved by the General Assembly. PR 015 explains the procedure used to calculate the fees. The organization has an annual budget and the IAAC treasurer monitors the overall finances.

Some IAAC activities are carried out in cooperation and with financial support from external organizations. The scope and nature of those projects are typically determined on an annual basis, are approved by the General Assembly and monitored by the Executive Committee.

12. International cooperation projects

IAAC benefits from the generous cooperation of external organizations that support some of the activities. Information about the programs can be found on the IAAC website information section.

References

FAQ
https://www.iaac.org.mx/index.php/en/about-iaac/frequently-asked-questions-en

IAAC Training
https://www.iaac.org.mx/index.php/en/information-en/training-courses-en

IAAC Bylaws
https://www.iaac.org.mx/index.php/en/component/jdownloads/send/49-ad-en/88-ad-002-iaac-bylaws-pdf

IAAC Full Members
https://www.iaac.org.mx/index.php/en/members-en/iaac-full-members-en

Procedures
https://www.iaac.org.mx/index.php/en/documents-en/procedures-en