Call for University Membership

IORA INDIAN OCEAN UNIVERSITY NETWORK

The IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR) was launched by the IORA Secretary-General on 15 November 2024 in Mauritius (see attached media release).

The Network is now open to receiving membership applications from interested universities in IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. The Network will formally commence operations on 1 July 2025. Universities joining on or before 30 June 2025 will be named as the UNIOR Founding Members.

This document sets out the purpose and functions of UNIOR and the rules and processes for Network membership.

Authorised university representatives are requested to complete and submit this membership application form by email to: unior@iora.int

Deadlines
Founding Membership status (Round 1):   30 April 2025
Founding Membership status (Round 2):   30 June 2025
Regular Membership status: 1 July 2025 onwards

UNIOR University Membership Application Form

Country of application:

University name:

University website:

Proposed university representative on UNIOR Steering Committee (title, name, position, contact details):

Summary overview of applicant university (250 words max):

Statement of university's main interests in joining UNIOR (250 words max):

Summary of institutional expertise in UNIOR objectives and priority areas (250 words max):

Signature:

Title, name and position:

Date:

IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR)

Vision of the Network

A dynamic regional academic platform delivering higher education and research collaboration to address sustainable development and transformation priorities, build leadership and institutional capacity, and promote regional cooperation across the Indian Ocean.

Objectives of the Network

1. **Regional university collaboration for sustainable transformation**:
   - to be a flagship IORA platform delivering impactful research and education collaboration to advance knowledge and serve the particular sustainable development and transformation needs of the Indian Ocean region, as identified in the IORA Priority Areas and Cross-cutting issues, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
2. **Growing regional leaders and education institutions**:
   - to facilitate and support regular regional exchanges between academics, students, university leaders and partners to share expertise, build capacity in the next generation of leaders and institutions, and enhance the 'IOR literacy' of the Indian Ocean Rim academic community;
3. **Supporting IORA's region-building:**
   - to help build a transnational Indian Ocean community and regional identity among the diverse peoples of IORA and enhance the capacity of IORA and its Member States to promote regional cooperation.

Membership of the Network

Membership of the Network is open to universities based in IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. To ensure both equity and manageable size, Network membership will be restricted to a maximum of 3 Universities per IORA Member State, and 1 University per Dialogue Partner, in the establishment phase of operations (2025-27).

Membership applications shall be formally considered and managed by a group consisting of: the UNIOR Co-Chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs; IORA Director Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation; Chair, IORA Academic Group; and the National Focal Point of the relevant Member State. Network membership shall be formally approved when the payment of the annual membership fee has been completed.

A Core Group of nine universities has led the establishment of the Network and will serve among the founding membership. These are: Curtin University (Australia & Mauritius), University of Mauritius (Mauritius), Universitas Paramadina (Indonesia), University of Pretoria (South Africa), Jawaharlal Nehru University (India), University of Dhaka (Bangladesh), University of Nairobi (Kenya), Université de La Réunion (Reunion/France) and University of Seychelles (Seychelles).

Founding membership status will apply to universities that formally join the network on or before 30 June 2025. Thereafter membership will be considered as regular.

Membership Fees

There shall be an annual membership fee of between USD 2,500 and USD 10,000, based on OECD DAC category (sliding scale). The membership fees will be pooled and managed transparently by the Network Secretariat. The pooled funding will be used to support annual Network activities, including the High-Level Annual Forum, collaborative research seed-funding grants, and short courses. The fund will also be used to cover the basic costs of the Secretariat. Co-funding from the IORA Special Fund will be applied for to support eligible activities of the Network, in addition to any other external contributions.

OECD DAC category	IORA Member State	Membership Fee
N/A	*Australia, France, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, UAE + IORA Dialogue Partners*	USD 10,000
Upper Middle Income Countries (6)	Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, South Africa, Thailand	USD 7,500
Lower Middle Income Countries (4)	India, Iran, Kenya, Sri Lanka,	USD 5,000
Least Developed Countries (7)	Bangladesh, Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Yemen	USD 2,500

IORA Member States grouped by OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) category (2024-25)

Leadership of the Network

The Network shall be led though a Co-Chair arrangement formed by two Network university members. The Inaugural Co-Chairs of the Network during its establishment phase (2025-27) are Professor Lina Pelliccione, President of Curtin University Mauritius (Australia & Mauritius), and Professor Sanjeev Sobhee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius (Mauritius).

Each Co-Chair shall appoint a Deputy Co-Chair from their institution. The Deputy Co-Chairs for the establishment phase 2025-27 are Associate Professor David Mickler (Dean Global, Africa, Curtin University) and Associate Professor Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur (Dean, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, University of Mauritius).

A Steering Committee shall be established, including the Co-Chairs, Deputy Co-Chairs, and one representative of each member university. The IORA Director Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation, and the Chair, IORA Academic Group (IORAG), shall be ex officio members. The Steering Committee shall meet three times per year (twice virtually, and once in-person during the Annual Network Forum).

A small Secretariat will be established to help manage the regular business of the Network including meetings, events and financial arrangments. The Secretariat shall be based at one of the Co-Chairs' home institutions.

Main activities of the Network

1. **Annual UNIOR Forum**
As the main annual activity, the Forum brings together senior university leaders from UNIOR members, Member State and Dialogue Partner policy-makers and practitioners, the IORA

Secretariat, funding bodies, industry partners, and selected UNIOR member researchers and students. This high-level engagement ensures buy-in and profiling from university leaders, governments, partners and funders (all key Network resources) while enhancing the impact of research and education on regional policy-making and industry. The two-day annual Forum follows a regional rotation model to be hosted by a different UNIOR member university each year (perhaps in alignment with other planned major IORA activities). More substantive Network research workshops and education programs, including annual IORAG meetings, could be delivered in the week prior to the Forum to enhance the value of the annual meeting; workshops and education programs can report on activities during the Forum to highlight the value and impact of the Network. Each annual Forum could focus on a particular overarching theme relevant to IORA, with prominent keynote speakers.

DAY	ACTIVITY	SPEAKERS
Pre-Forum	UNIOR research workshops and short course education programs	• Research project teams • Educators and students • Related government agencies, industry partners and donors
1	UNIOR FORUM DAY 1 *Collaborative IOR Research, Education and Professional Development Initiatives*	• IORA Academic Group (IORAG) • UNIOR research project leaders • UNIOR educators and students • Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG) • IORA Early Career Professionals Network (ECP-N) • IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Program (NMIP)
	*UNIOR **Forum Dinner** and Host Cultural Event*	• Prominent regional keynote speaker
2	UNIOR FORUM Day 2 *High-Level Dialogue: IOR Academic Diplomacy for Regional Cooperation*	• IORA Secretary-General • IORA Director Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation • Vice-Chancellors and other senior university leaders • UNIOR Co-Chairs and Steering Group • IORAG Chair • Leaders and policy-makers from IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners • Major funders and partners

Example of UNIOR Annual High-Level Forum Program

2. UNIOR annual collaborative research seed-funding grants
The Network will seed-fund collaborative research projects per year, with applications assessed on a competitive basis. The projects would need to meet the following criteria: (i) at least 5 UNIOR member universities are included on the project from at least 5 different Member States or Dialogue Partners; (ii) the project identifies its direct relevance to at least one of the IORA Priority/Focus Areas (see below) and one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals; (iii) inclusion of at least one PhD student/Early Career Researcher on each project for mentoring; (iv) achievement of gender balance on the program team. The scheme could also prioritise projects that address issues falling under the remit of the IORA Sustainable Development Program (ISDP). Successful projects would need to build in a clear plan and

process for obtaining follow-on funding from external sources, and project leaders would present their projects and results at the next UNIOR Forum.

IORA Priority Areas
Maritime Safety & Security
Trade & Investment Facilitation
Fisheries Management
Disaster Risk Management
Tourism & Cultural Exchanges
Academic, Science & Technology
IORA Cross-cutting issues
Blue Economy
Women's Economic Empowerment

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

3. UNIOR annual regional short courses

The Network will aim to support one or more annual collaborative regional student short courses, such as the existing Master's student short course convened annually on *International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region*. Different combinations of UNIOR members could be involved in different short courses so that a range of students have the opportunity to participate in one of the collaborative courses during their studies (these could also be linked to the IORA Priority Themes and/or SDGs). Each course might have a maximum of 20 students, as well as teaching staff from the universities involved. The courses may run for 10-14 days and annual delivery could rotate around the Network.

4. UNIOR staff and student exchanges, internships, scholarships

The Network will help to facilitate regular staff and student exchanges between member universities. This may include visiting research and teaching fellowships for academic staff and postgraduate research students, professional staff exchanges for professional development and institutional capacity building, and student study exchanges. The Network may explore the development of special travel scholarships to support student exchanges between members, as well as draw on other external funding sources and regional mobility programs. The Network could also link directly to the IORA-Nelson Mandela 'Be the Legacy' Internship Programme, for which the 'long-term objective [is] to create a strong and growing base of young people in the Indian Ocean Region that understand and support the need to safeguard an Indian Ocean that is safe, secure and develops sustainably.' Network member universities may create other incentives and support structures within their respective institutions to facilitate such regional exchanges. Selected exchange staff and students and interns could report on their experiences and outcomes at the next UNIOR Forum.