Report of the panel of the external review of the HAC

(Hungarian Accreditation Committee)

May 2018

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the compliance of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság, HAC) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted between January 2018 and September 2018. This is the third external review of the HAC by ENQA. The HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2002. It has been reviewed by ENQA for compliance with the ESG in 2008 and 2013. Following its "full member under review" status after the 2013 evaluation, its full membership was reconfirmed in 2015 through an external partial review. In July 2017 the HAC applied for renewal of its ENQA membership and registration on EQAR. This report provides information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of the HAC should be reconfirmed, and to EQAR to support the agency´s application to the register.

The HAC was established by an act of parliament in the first Higher Education Act in 1993 and currently operates by the 2011 Higher Education Act, its amendments, and the Government Decree 19/2012 on Higher Education Quality Assurance and Enhancement. It conducts the initial accreditation of HEIs, programmes and doctoral schools, and the periodic accreditation of HEIs, programmes and doctoral schools. Its resources derive from accreditation fees paid by higher education institutions and the annual budget received from the Ministry of Human Capacities. Due to the increase in the Ministry allocation, the physical resources of the HAC, in terms of infrastructure and staffing, have considerably improved.

The HAC expert activities, accreditation, analysis and decision-making are built on an objective criteria framework. All activities are independent, unbiased, non-political, and follow the principal values set out in international standards. The HAC seeks to enhance the internal quality culture of HEIs with its activities, thus helping to improve the quality of Hungarian higher education and its international recognition. While its work is held in high regard by stakeholders, the involvement of international stakeholders is limited (reduced to the evaluation of religious programmes, foreign-language universities in Hungary and doctoral schools). Adequate financial resources are now available for introducing English as the language of evaluation procedures. The HAC would also need to involve more non-academic experts (e.g. representatives of civil society, labour unions, entrepreneurs and regional/local authorities) in its accreditation/evaluation and QA activities. The number of students participating in decision-making processes has increased but students need to be involved in the design, implementation and improvement of all processes and included in all expert committees.

At the same time, it is necessary for HAC to give more consideration to conducting thematic analyses. Clearly, the HAC has produced a substantial number of valuable reports, presentations, articles and papers. Although evidence of thematic analyses can be found in them, detailed analyses of the full range of the agency's external quality assurance activities need to be conducted and disseminated to support QA. It is clear too that the HAC conducts surveys on many of its procedures and discusses results. Yet, the processes of examining data and giving feedback to stakeholders need to be regularised and formalised. The recent appointment of a QA committee in March 2018 will help the HAC to ensure the development of a review pattern.

The HAC's external QA processes and decisions are based on published standards and procedures that address the ESG Part 1 comprehensively. Procedures are defined with clarity in detailed guidelines and through criteria in accordance with current legislation. However, there is a level of complexity that can be confusing for HEIs, in particular for those charged with responsibility for preparing documentation for evaluation and accreditation exercises within institutions. The HAC might help institutions navigate through standards, laws and decrees through a guidebook containing all the relevant information. There is room for improvement in site visits: they could be lengthened to allow

sufficient time for in-depth discussions with different groups of interviewees. Also, the identity of experts in ex-ante evaluations should be known and regular training should be provided to them. Likewise, the volume of training for experts in ex-post procedures needs to increase. In general, methodologies are fit for their purpose, although the practice of evaluating doctoral schools every six months is time consuming and resource consuming. A structured and effective complaints procedure needs to be put in place.

The panel finds the HAC fully compliant with the following nine standards: ESG 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6. In the panel's judgment, the HAC substantially complies with the following standards: ESG 3.4, 3.6, 2.2 and 2.7. In the panel's opinion, the HAC is partially compliant with ESG 2.4. The panel has made recommendations under five standards and suggestions for further development under four standards.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság, HAC) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted between January 2018 and September 2018.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015 and they fulfil membership provisions.

As this is HAC's third external review by ENQA, the panel is expected to provide clear evidence of results in all areas and to acknowledge progress from the previous review. The panel has adopted a developmental approach, as the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* aim at constant enhancement of the agencies.

The HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2002, when the organisation opened its membership to non-EU applicants (Hungary joined the EU in 2004). It has been reviewed for compliance with the ESG by ENQA in 2008 and 2013. Following its "full member under review" status after the 2013 evaluation, its full membership was reconfirmed in 2015 through an external partial review. This panel is expected to acknowledge progress from the previous review. The present report, therefore, informs on the main findings of the 2013 review and the 2015 partial review.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2013 REVIEW

The 2013 review panel paid particular attention to the policies, procedures, and criteria in place, in accordance with the Statutes of ENQA and in line with the process described in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), as adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna process in 2005.

The panel noted that since the previous review in 2008, the legal and general context in which the HAC operated had changed in ways that threatened the agency's ability to work "as an independent agency with sufficient resources to carry out its tasks within Higher Education in Hungary" (SAR 41). On the one hand, the government had taken more direct control of the HAC. The Ministry delegated half of the HAC members and the HAC President. The Prime Minister appointed them and could withdraw appointments at any time without explanations from the government. On the other hand, the budget of the agency had decreased considerably since 2008 and had been reduced almost by half between 2009 and 2011. For these reasons the HAC was designated a member under review.

The review panel found the HAC to be fully compliant with three of the criteria, substantially compliant with two of the criteria and partially compliant with two of the criteria. The outcome is summarised in the following table:

ENQA Criterion / ESG Reference		Conclusions of the panel for:		
	Sub-criterion	ESG Part 2	ENQA Sub-criterion	ENQA Criterion
	ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.5 Reporting procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.6 Follow up-procedures	sc		
	ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews	sc		
	ESG 2.8 System-wide analysis	sc		
ENQA sub-criterion/ ESG 3.1: Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education/ Part 2			**FC**	
ENQA sub-criterion/ ESG 3.3: Activities			**FC**	
ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1: ESG 3.3				**FC**
ENQA Criterion 2/ ESG 3.2: Official status				**SC**
ENQA Criterion 3/ ESG 3.4: Resources				**PC**
ENQA Criterion 4/ ESG 3.5: Mission statement				**FC**
ENQA Criterion 5/ ESG 3.6: Independence				**PC**
ENQA Criterion 6/ ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies				**SC**
ENQA Criterion 7/ ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures				**FC**
ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgments, appeals system and contributions to aims of ENQA				**FC**

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2015 PARTIAL REVIEW

The 2015 review panel focused on the two ENQA criteria where the HAC had been found to be partially compliant in May 2013:

- ENQA criterion 3 - ESG 3.4: Resources
- ENQA criterion 5 - ESG 3.6: Independence

In the light of the documentary evidence submitted by the HAC, as supported and endorsed by the oral evidence presented during the site visit, the panel observed "significant improvement in the areas of most concern in 2013" (SAR 15). In 2015, the panel noted that the agency had increased and regularised its financial resources and had added two programme officers to its staff. The panel also

remarked an increase in the agency's degree of independence and cooperation with the Ministry of Human Resources and the Educational Authority.

The conclusions of the panel were as follows:

ENQA Criterion/ESG Reference	Conclusions of the panel
ENQA Criterion 3/ESG 3.4: Resources	FC
ENQA Criterion 5/ ESG 3.6: Independence	SC

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2018 external review of the HAC was conducted in line with the process described in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of the HAC was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

Name	Background of activities
Norma Ryan	Higher Education Consultant, former Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, University College Cork – National University of Ireland Cork, Ireland – EUA nomination. Chair
Nieves Pascual Soler	Accredited Full Professor of English at University of Jaén, member of the Technical Committee for the Direction of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Degrees at the Andalusian Agency of Knowledge (AAC-DEVA), Spain – ENQA nomination. Secretary
Mark Frederiks	International Policy Coordinator, Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), The Netherlands – ENQA nomination.
Dávid Kiss	Student at University of Debrecen; advisor of HÖOK (National Union of Students in Hungary), Project manager at Educational Authority; – ESU nomination

The panel was supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator Agnė Grajauskienė, who monitored the integrity of the process and ensured that ENQA expectations were met.

The review targeted enhancing the quality of the agency. It had the purpose of examining the activities of the HAC that relate to teaching and learning, and their relevant links to research and innovation. In addition, it addressed the HAC's internal regulations for the recognition of other agencies' external QA activities and decisions. Although the HAC also evaluates applications for faculty positions, this activity is not within the scope of the ESG and was, therefore, not analysed.

The HAC submitted its self-assessment report to the external review panel in February 2018. The preparation of the external review panel was provided via a conference call with Agnė Grajauskienė on April 9. The schedule of the site visit was discussed and finalised with the HAC.

Self-assessment report

At its meeting of July 7, 2017, the HAC Board passed the decision to initiate its external evaluation for the purpose of renewing its membership in ENQA and apply for inclusion in EQAR. It set up a self-

assessment commission to coordinate the process of evaluation. The commission met in September 2017 to agree on the contents of the report. A SWOT analysis was requested from the members of the HAC Board and the staff. In addition, feedback collected from HEIs in the spring of 2017 was examined. The report was finalised on December 2, 2017, and it was approved by the Board on December 15 (SAR 8).

In broad terms, the SAR is divided into three main parts. The first part offers an introduction to HE in Hungary and looks into the history, profile and QA activities of the HAC. The second part tackles individual standards and provides evidence of compliance. The third part is devoted to self-analysis. The HAC examines its strengths and weakness and identifies areas for future development. The SAR is clear, comprehensive and informative of the national framework of higher education, the agency's activities, external and internal quality assurance methodologies, protocols for setting standards, evaluation and accreditation procedures and practices. It includes a critical SWOT analysis that will serve as an excellent foundation for further improvement.

Site visit

The panel had a preparatory meeting on May 1, in Budapest, before the site visit, to outline overall tasks and issues to discuss. It included an interview with the agency's resource person to clarify elements related to the HE system in which the HAC operates, the history and role of QA in Hungarian HE, and the present situation of the HAC.

During the site visit (May 2-4), the panel met with the team responsible for the SAR, the HAC's boards, its committees, members of the secretariat, visiting teams and external experts, HEIs' representatives, groups of stakeholders from outside academia, students involved in the evaluation procedures of the HAC, and other representatives relevant for the functions of the agency (Annex 1). The panel took the following steps for the purpose at hand:

- It developed general lines of enquiry and established an agenda of issues to be clarified with each group. The list of themes and questions was refined as meetings proceeded.
- It deliberated on the SAR, went through all the documents available and identified additional documents it wished to have access to.
- Based on the information presented, the panel drew its conclusions. The panel tackled every ESG criteria in private discussions, debated key findings and confirmed areas of concern.

The site visit concluded with a final de-briefing meeting involving the panel members, staff and board members of the agency. After the site visit the panel secretary and the chair drafted the report, which was then circulated to the rest of the panel members for further discussion and clarification.

The report was based on the SAR, the documents submitted by the agency prior and during the site visit, previous external review reports (2013 and 2015), the agency's annual reports, recommendations of the HAC's International Advisory Board (IAB), findings of the site-visit meetings and other materials on the agency's website.

The HAC had the opportunity to comment on the report for factual accuracy. The report was finalised in full consultation with the entire review panel and forwarded to the ENQA Secretariat and the HAC.

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In the academic year 2017-2018, there are 66 HEIs in Hungary: 29 are state-funded (2 are colleges) and 37 are non-public (28 are colleges). Of the former, 5 are universities of applied sciences and 2 are colleges. Of the latter, 28 are colleges (mostly religious) and 2 are universities of applied sciences (SAR 9).

In order to qualify as a university an institution has to offer a master programme in at least two fields of study and a doctoral programme in one field. Half of its teaching and research staff must have a doctoral degree. Colleges are authorised to provide bachelor programmes, master programs, single-cycle long programmes and training that does not result in a HE degree (vocational training and post-graduate specialist training). One-third of their teaching and research staff must have a doctoral degree (SAR 10). Universities of applied sciences are "tertiary institutions with at least four Bachelor programmes and two Master programmes, and at least two dual trainings (if its accreditation includes engineering, IT, agriculture, nature science or business studies), where at least 45% of its teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree, operates an academic student workshop, and has the capacity to offer foreign language courses at some of its departments" (SAR 10).

"State universities and colleges have the vast majority of the student population, with about two thirds in state universities and another 20 percent in state colleges. For the academic year 2017/2018 there were 72,641 students in total accepted in higher education. Of these, 47,684 were accepted into Bachelor, 11,540 into Master, 7,462 into single-cycle Master-level, and 5,955 into higher education VET programmes. The number of PhD students enrolled in September 2016, the last date where complete figures were available, were 2,404" (SAR 9).

Within the framework of the Bologna system, bachelor programmes (BA/BSc), consisting of 6 to 8 semesters (ISCED 6, 180-240 ECTS credits), lead to the first degree. Master level programmes (Ma/MSc) consist of 2 to 4 semesters and require the first degree as admission criterion (ISCED 7). Along with the BA/MA system, in some study fields (like medicine, architecture, law, veterinary science, forestry and some programmes in art and music) there are long programmes, of 10 to 12 semesters (ISCED 7, 300-360 ECTS credits), leading to a MA/MSc degree.

Beside degree programmes, colleges and universities offer higher level vocational education and training programmes, of 4 to 5 semesters (120 ECTS credits), leading to an ISCED 5 level higher vocational certificate. They do not result in a HE degree (bachelor or master) but in an advanced vocational qualification included in the National Qualification Register (NQR). These programmes can also be offered by upper secondary schools in cooperation with a HEI.

The HE area also includes: "Postgraduate specialization courses with an entry requirement of Ba/BSc or master level provide a further qualification but do not award a higher-level degree." Typically organised as part-time programmes, "these programmes prepare for the secondary school leaving examination and also for vocational qualification examinations" ("Public Education in Hungary," 6).

Upon completion of the doctoral course (of at least 180 ECTS credits), a doctoral comprehensive examination and the public defense of a doctoral thesis, a PhD or DLA (Doctor of Liberal Arts) degree is awarded. In some cases, students may also apply for a PhD degree on the basis of an individual study plan, if they have a master's degree and fulfil the requirements for admission to the programme.
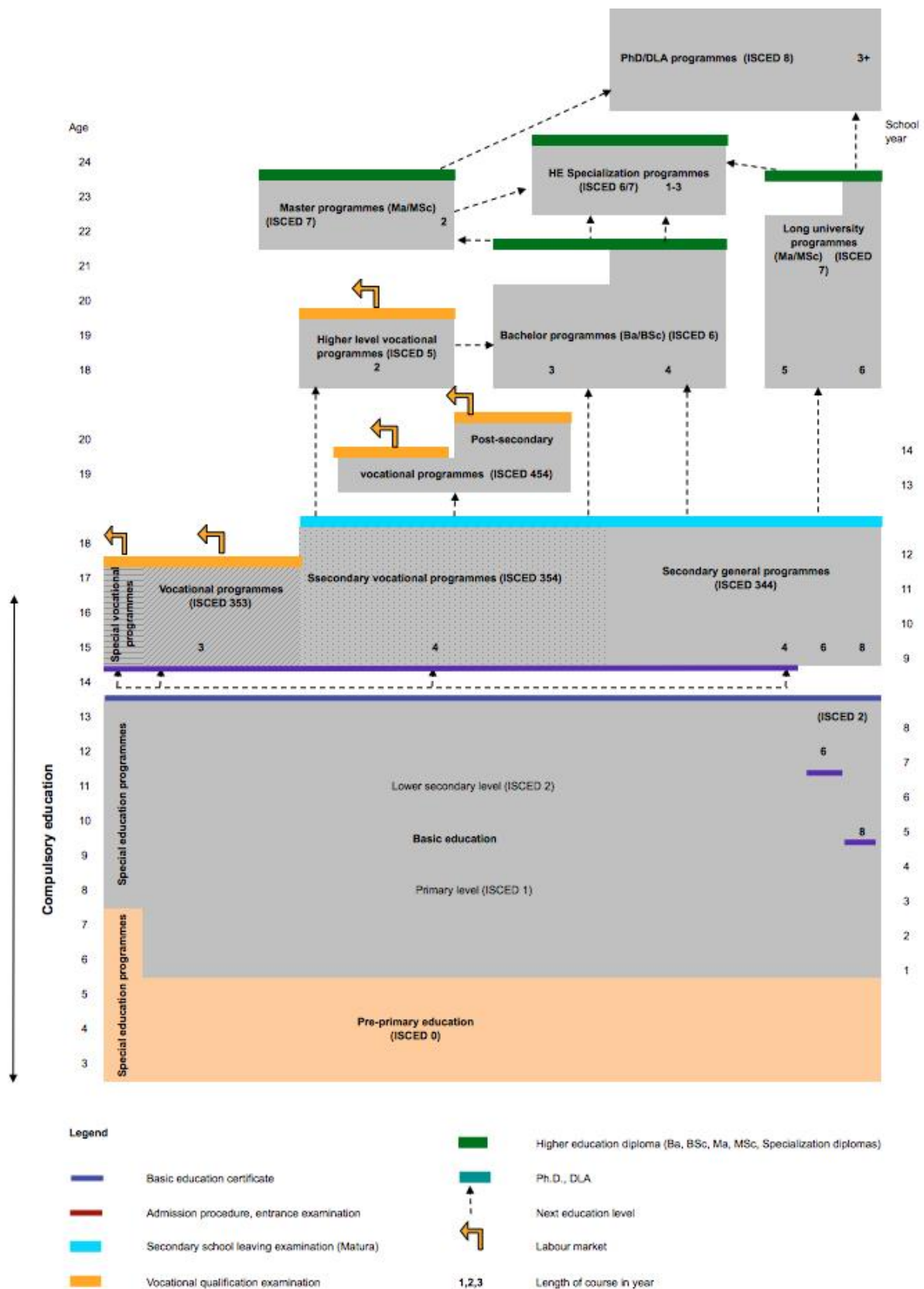
Figure 1: Degree structure of the Hungarian education system (from "Public Education in Hungary", 6)

According to the "Change of Pace in Higher Education" initiative approved by the Hungarian Government in December 2016, the "uncritical implementation of the Bologna-system" has led to an "[o]ver-complicated uneconomical structure of degree programmes [and] occasionally worthless degrees." This factor, along with the "declining performance of lecturers, researchers and students, [and] governance systems with a wide range of powers but limited obligations" drove the Ministry of Human Capacities (EMMI) to switch the gears of Hungarian HE "to the speed of the global world by creating a system that delivers better quality" ("Change of Pace," 5). Key aspects of this strategy are:

- Strengthening the relations of HEIs with employers (corporations) through a dual training system that transfers what has been learned in the classroom to the workforce. This implies that "new forms of education and training will be created" and programmes not promoting employment will be eliminated (5).
- Differentiating the profiles of institutions. Functionally, "Hungarian higher education will offer two fundamental types of institutions in the future:

    University, where the focus is on *establishing new academic knowledge*, and the operation can be deducted from this mission; several universities of science have key importance among universities (due to professional and scientific importance, size), which are the dominant elements of the institutional system of the Hungarian higher education;

    University of applied sciences, which is a professional training institution mainly focused on meeting the economic-social needs and the *utilisation of knowledge*. This is the case even if some institutions are officially colleges according to their name" (SAR 35-36).

- Internationalizing HEIs by increasing the mobility of faculty, staff and students while raising the number of incoming international students
- Transforming the high-level management arrangement of institutions through a chancellery system that grants the institution final responsibility for financial and economic decisions. HEIs will "improve their ability to raise market funds and improve their social-economic engagement" (SAR 73).
- Developing a performance-based HE. On the principle of performance, the objective of the Ministry is to redefine QA and enhance the role of the HAC: "The transformation of the accreditation system, [and the] enhancement of the role of the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee in measuring the skills, competences and learning outcomes necessary for the classification of outcome results and study cycles, besides entry regulations" (SAR 21).

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Hungary develops its procedure of accreditation in the 1990s. The first Higher Education Act (1993) rules that: "For the validation of the quality of education and scientific activity in higher education […] the Government shall create the Hungarian Accreditation Committee" (19.80). The Act was modified in 1996 and amended in 2000. In 2005 a new Higher Education Act came into effect, focusing on the Bologna process in the implementation of the EU's higher educational policy. The legal basis for the quality assurance system in place at the time of this review was provided by the 2011 Higher Education Act, its amendments, and the Government Decree 19/2012 on Higher Education Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

By law, HEIs are required to set a committee composed of professors, researchers, staff and students for the continuous supervision and evaluation of their educational and research activities, programmes and facilities. HEIs conduct a self-evaluation and prepare a report in accordance with the HAC's standards and guidelines.

The responsibilities of the HAC include the "supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the quality of higher education, scientific research, and the scientific quality of artistic creation" (2011 Higher Education Act, XVIII.41,70). The HAC conducts the initial accreditation of HEIs, programmes and doctoral schools, and the periodic accreditation of HEIs, programmes and doctoral schools. "The HAC distinguishes between evaluation and accreditation from the perspective of the aftermath of the decision rather than the process as such." Although evaluations end "in a resolution just like accreditation decisions," they are forwarded to the Ministry and are issued as national-level decrees. Accreditation decisions by HAC concern specific institutions or programmes at specific institutions" (SAR 26). As seen below (ESG. 3.3), the Minister of Human Capacities (responsible for education, formerly in English Minister of Human Resources) cannot change the agency's decisions but can ignore a negative accreditation decision.

Accredited HEIs obtain an operating license that is issued by the Educational Authority, an administrative body established by the government that acts as a higher education registration centre. It "carries official inspections" of institutions and "operates the higher education information system" (SAR 11). Licenses are reviewed every five years.

While HAC is the only QA body for HE, the Dual Training Council ensures "quality assurance and assessment of the work-based learning component of dual training" (SAR 11). Other bodies indirectly involved with QA are:
- The Hungarian Rectors' Conference: independent public corporation that represents HEIs and participates in the governance of higher education as a consultative organization.
- The Hungarian Doctoral Council: "a body consisting of the chairs of the doctoral councils of higher education institutions, adopting positions in affairs relating to doctorate programmes and the conferral of doctoral degrees" (2011 Higher Education Act, XVIII.42,7(2)). It advises the Minister on different issues concerning doctoral schools.
- The Higher Education Planning Board: "promotes the link between tertiary education and the labour market" (SAR 11).
- The National Scientific Student Council: organises scientific and artistic workshops and forums for students and promotes their work.
- The National Union of Students in Hungary: represents students nationwide.
- The Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates: represents doctoral students.

THE HAC

The HAC has the mission of assessing "the quality of educational activities and the internal quality assurance (QA) systems of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Hungary. It elaborates its own rules of procedure and criteria for evaluation" (SAR 7).

"[T]he HAC has developed and renewed its QA approach several times over the years" (SAR 14), moving beyond a quality control to a quality enhancement perspective. Two main "factors have recently driven the need for change at the HAC" (SAR 14). The first was the ministerial strategy to

develop a performance-based HE referred to above. The second was the implementation, in the spring of 2016, of the new ESG 2015 in Hungarian HEIs and agencies.

The Board of the HAC "is the final decision-making body and determines the by-laws, rules of procedure, organisation and evaluation and accreditation criteria and procedures, and passes resolutions on accreditation decisions" (SAR 17). It is composed of 20 members. Of them, 9 are delegated by the Ministry of Human Capacities (EMMI); 3 by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference; 2 by the Academy of Sciences; 2 by the Churches that have their own higher education institutions; 1 by the Hungarian Academy of Arts; 1 by the Association of PhD and DLA Candidates; 1 by the National Union of Students in Hungary, and 1 by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The President is nominated from among its members by the Minister in agreement with the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Their terms are for six years, except for students, whose terms are two years. Terms are renewable once.

The organization chart of the agency is presented below (from the HAC's website):
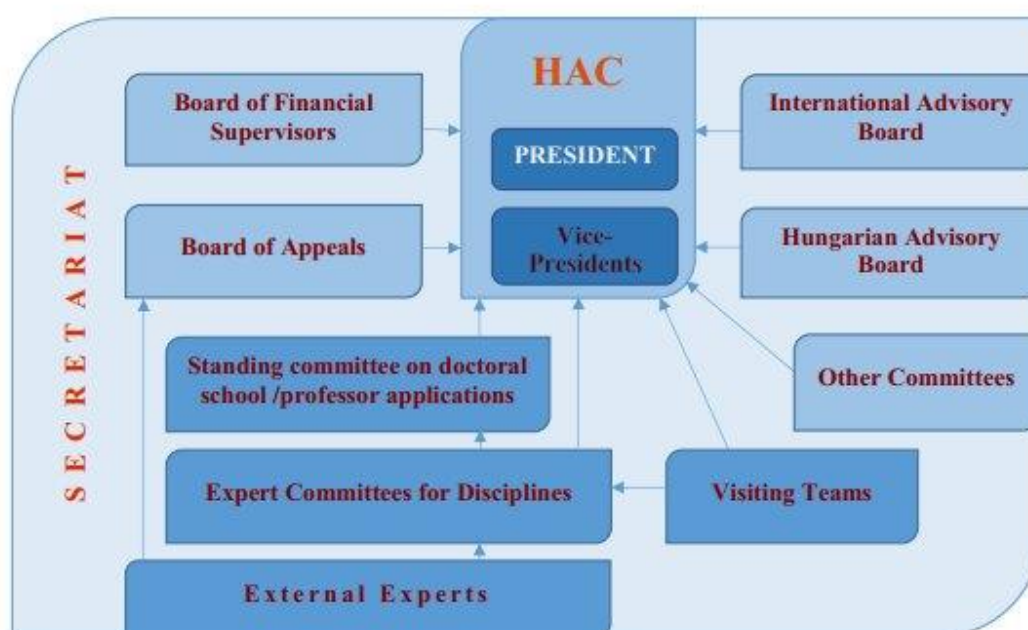
The statutory Boards of the HAC are:

- Board of Financial Supervisors: "It has three members appointed by the Minister, with one member recommended by the Rectors' Conference and a second by the Academy of Sciences. Their mandates are for six years and are renewable." It "meets at least twice a year to review the HAC's finances" (SAR 18).
- Board of Appeals: Consists of three members delegated by the Minister. Their mandates are for six years (renewable once). It operates independently of the HAC Board.
- International Advisory Board (IAB): It consists of seven renowned authorities on HE and QA from different European countries. It meets once a year to review the work of the HAC and issues formal recommendations.

- Hungarian Advisory Board: It "was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, re-established in 2012 with seven members from business and industry" (SAR 20). It meets once a year.

Besides these boards, there is a number of committees:

- Expert committees for disciplines:
  Agriculture (19 members, including chair)
  Humanities (18)
  Religion and Theology (10)
  Engineering (19)
  Art (17)
  Medicine (20)
  Social Sciences (20)
  Natural Sciences (17)

- Other committees:
  Standing Committee on University Professor and Doctoral School Applications (10)
  Committee on Conflict-of-interest and Ethics Issues (ad hoc)
  Quality Assurance Committee (since July 2017) (13)
  Strategy committee (5)

The Secretariat consists of a Secretary General, the Head of the Secretariat, the Financial Director, the IT administrator, 8 programme officers and 4 administrative staff. The position of Secretary General was not filled at the time of the visit and the role was fulfilled by the Financial Director.

HAC'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, the HAC undertakes the following evaluation and accreditation activities:

- Initial accreditation of new HEIs.
- Initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of bachelor programmes.
- Initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of master programmes.
- Initial accreditation of bachelor programmes.
- Initial accreditation of master programmes.
- Initial accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities.
- Initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of VET programmes.
- Initial accreditation of VET programmes.
- Accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles.
- Accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in disciplinary clusters.
- Accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles.

Initial evaluations of study programmes are conducted via the HAC's database TIR (the panel was given a demonstration of the database during the visit). Ex-ante accreditations of doctoral schools are conducted via doktori.hu, a database owned and run by the Doctoral Council and used by the HAC. These are desk exercises wherein, after the programme officer has checked that legal requirements are met, two external experts assigned by the HAC give their opinions. Then, the HAC's expert

committees discuss the case and make a proposal to the Board, which passes a resolution. Ex-post accreditations of study programmes and HEIs involve a self-assessment report based on the HAC's guidelines, a site visit, a review report and a follow-up.

The table below presents the number of applications for evaluation and accreditation in all different categories received by the HAC from 2015 until 2017 and the decisions taken by the agency (SAR 25-26).

Type of Activity		Supported			Not Supported		
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Ex-ante accreditation of new HEIs		0	0	0	0	0	0
Ex-ante procedures: VET programmes	Initial evaluation of education and learning outcome requirements	0	6	9	0	0	0
	Initial accreditation of VET programmes	2	3	4	1	2	0
Ex-ante procedures: Bachelor programmes	Initial evaluation of education and learning outcome requirements	1	0	3	0	0	0
	Initial accreditation of Bachelor programmes	9	16	16	8	17	9
Ex-ante procedures: Master programmes	Initial evaluation of learning and outcome requirements	2	1	4	2	1	2
	Initial accreditation of Master programmes	25	15	11	21	19	16
	Single-cycle Master programmes	14	10	4	5	8	7
Accreditation of doctoral schools	Initial accreditation	2	0	3	3	1	2
	Re-accreditation	125	98	57	13	10	4
Ex-post institutional accreditation		14	11	1	1	2	5
Accreditation of Bachelor/Master programmes in disciplinary clusters		38/14	115/90	0	1/0	15/6	0

HAC's international activities

Concerning QA international activities of the agency, "[t]he HAC has not provided evaluation services abroad, with the exception of off-site provision by Hungarian institutions. These concern predominantly Hungarian-language programmes for Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries, and are evaluated as part of the given institutional accreditation process" (SAR 26-27). For accrediting foreign HEIs in Hungary, the "HAC has had criteria and procedures in place for many years" (SAR 27). However, "[t]here were only very few such applications. Prior to the 2011 higher education law the Ministry did not involve the HAC in issuing licenses for foreign institutions. For this reason, the 22 foreign higher education institutions operating in Hungary are doing so under a license without any expiration date" (SAR 27).

Other international activities include:

- Membership of ENQA, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA, formerly CEE Network).
- Hosting of two ENQA Members' Forums and a training seminar for ENQA experts.
- Cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian agency SKVC.

HAC'S FUNDING

The HAC is a non-governmental organisation for public service. Its resources derive from the annual budget received from the EMMI and the fees charged for services performed in connection to evaluation. "In the past five years that [i.e., revenue from evaluation fees] came to around 40% of total income on average" (SAR 43). For regulations legislating public expenditure and resources of the HAC, see ESG 3.5 below.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF HAC WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

> Standard:
>
> Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

2013 review recommendation

On criteria 3.1., 3.3., and 3.5. (Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education; Activities and Mission Statement respectively), the 2013 panel of the external review of the HAC deemed the agency Fully Compliant. Nevertheless, three problems were spotted:

- Training of experts for ex-ante and ex-post evaluations.
- Use of international experts.
- Student participation in the decision-making process of the HAC.

The panel recommended employing experienced peers for ex-ante evaluations, recruiting more international experts and negotiating with the Ministry of National Resources and Educational Authority the involvement of students in all decision-making processes (SAR 29-33).

Evidence

The main external QA activities of the HAC are defined in Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) and described in Chapter 5 of the SAR. They are also presented on pages 15 and 16 of this report. The mission of the HAC is outlined on page 13 of this document and is available on the agency's website. Also published on the website are the HAC's guidelines and criteria for evaluation and accreditation.

The organisation and composition of the agency's Board, the IAB and the Hungarian Advisory Board can also be accessed at the HAC's website. The English version lists the eight expert and special committees. The Hungarian version records the names of their members.

The composition and delegating bodies to the HAC Board are set down in the 2011 Higher Education Act (71.1). The Board consists of 20 members, all of them Hungarian. Nine members are academics delegated by the Minister of Human Capacities; two delegated by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; one delegated by the Academy of Arts; three delegated by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference; two delegated by representatives of churches that maintain HEIs; and one each delegated by the Hungarian Chamber of Trade and Industry, the National Union of Students and the Association of PhD and DLA Candidates. All, except for the students, must hold a scientific degree. Rectors, chancellors, public and civil servants may not be members on the Board. The President of the HAC is chosen from

among the Board members in agreement between the Minister and the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The term of the Board members is six years and may be renewed once, except for students, whose term is two years.

The Board is the final decision-making body and determines the by-laws, rules of procedure, organisation and evaluation and accreditation criteria and procedures, and passes resolutions on accreditation decisions. The Government Decree 19/2012 requires the by-laws to be published on the HAC website and the Ministry bulletin. In addition to all procedures, the by-laws determine conflict of interest rules and set down that deliberations may not be influenced by any personal or official interests.

The HAC has adopted a formal strategy policy in December 2016, which includes a mission and a policy on QA. The mission of the HAC is to evaluate and foster high-level teaching and learning in Hungarian HEIs, and to deliver QA that supports each level and each participant of HE. During its operation, the HAC considers the legislation on HE, performs its dedicated tasks, complies with the criteria set in the ESG 2015, and applies the objective, complex and up-to-date criteria developed by the HAC expert commissions and Board. The HAC reinforces its independent operations, and applies, develops and/or adapts a methodology in evaluation in line with international standards. The strategy goes on to describe the HAC's values (SAR 34):

(1) *transparency*: the HAC publishes its decisions and the principles its analyses are based on, discloses its resolutions and the criteria used in decision making and analysis;

(2) *independence*: independent operation ensures the quality and recognition of the HAC's work, while institutional independence ensures the respect and support for the autonomy of HEIs;

(3) *cooperation*: the HAC regularly consults the stakeholders of HE, cooperates with HE representative organisations, partner organisations in QA, and key international organisations;

(4) *integrity*: during its operation, the HAC acts in an irreproachable, just, fair, impartial, objective and professional way.

The HAC has standing and *ad hoc* committees. The former group encompasses the committees for disciplinary groups, usually chaired by a HAC Board member and including up to 19 external members. The majority are professors or researchers who work at research institutes, though the Art and Engineering committees also include a member from business or industry. Five of the eight committees include a student or PhD student.

The HAC has an International Advisory Board (IAB), whose membership currently consists of seven renowned authorities on higher education and QA from different European countries. A Hungarian Advisory Board was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, re-established in 2012 with seven members from business and industry. Both meet once a year and review the work of the HAC. The International Board issues formal recommendations for consideration by the HAC Board.

Accreditation decisions of the HAC pass through a hierarchy of levels. The purpose for this approach is both to involve peers as external evaluators and to ensure consistency with an additional scrutiny of an application in the standing committees, who have an overview of a range of applications in the given field.

A dedicated committee on university professor and doctoral schools applications is responsible for applying the quality criteria set by the HAC for all disciplines and has to ensure consistency and the

realisation of all qualitative and quantitative criteria to enable the Board to make its decisions. The final decision is the HAC Board's responsibility and requires both expertise and a global view on issues.

For ex-ante evaluation, two external experts are invited from the HAC's standing pool of experts to evaluate applications based on the HAC criteria via the HAC's TIR database (http://tir.mab.hu/), for which they receive an access code. A third evaluator may be invited if the first two are inconclusive. (For the procedure on the selection of experts, see under Standard 2.4.) The evaluations are collated by an assigned programme officer and brought before the expert committee for the relevant discipline. This committee discusses the application and received expert evaluations in depth. Each application is assigned to a member of the disciplinary committee, who scrutinises it as a "third expert" and reports to the committee before it is discussed. The committee finally makes a recommendation to the Board, where the committee chair reports the case.

Similarly, initial (ex-ante) accreditation of doctoral schools is conducted through the www.doktori.hu database. This database is maintained by the National Doctoral Council and linked with the HAC, which runs a closed domain for the HAC evaluations. Following the committee for the relevant discipline, the standing committee for university professorship and doctoral school applications also discusses the application in the same procedure described above, before passing its findings to the HAC Board for decision-making.

Ex-post institutional accreditation involves site visits by review teams. The team always involves a QA expert as well as a student. The team prepares an evaluation report that is sent to the rector of the evaluated institution for factual comment, and finally goes to the HAC Board together with the rector's comments for a final resolution on the accreditation decision.

For ex-post accreditation of Bachelor and Master programmes in disciplinary clusters, which examine an entire discipline on all levels at all institutions where it is taught in the country, a pool of reviewers with expertise in the given discipline and including a student and a QA expert are set up. The teams for the actual review are chosen from the pool to avoid conflicts of interest with the institution to be visited. The panel prepares an in-depth report on the discipline and the individual programmes in all institutions, with proposals for an accreditation decision for each institution and programme. In addition, the disciplinary evaluations and accreditation processes contain a strong developmental element. A thematic analysis examines the entire field and draws conclusions on its overall quality. The report is discussed by the HAC's expert committee for the discipline, then passed on to the HAC Board.

The existing doctoral schools, of which there are currently more than 190, are reviewed for any changes in the composition and overall qualifications of their core full-time academic staff every 15 April and 30 September via the www.doktori.hu database following the same procedure described above.

The HAC has an annual plan for its QA activities, and a five-year plan for an accreditation cycle (SAR; Pre- visit clarifications). The strategy includes training for HEIs, HAC experts or staff, events to be organised or attended. Activities such as training or participation in international events are included in the financial plans; thematic analyses are planned.

The HAC has been actively involved in the international projects aimed at development of higher education quality since its establishment in 1993. A broader international participation remains an ongoing strategic goal. The international connection reflects on the HAC's adherence to international standards; its embeddedness in international QA and the observance of trends in the field; and the

importance assigned to its international recognition, all of which advance the enhancement of Hungarian higher QA experts who have provided detailed extensive advice for the HAC and its work.

The HAC has hosted two Members' Forums, most recently in April 2016, and a training seminar for ENQA experts in May 2013. The HAC is also a long-standing member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and founding member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA, formerly CEE Network). Senior staff of HAC have served, *inter alia*, as a board member of INQAAHE, as board member and vice-president of ENQA, as secretary general of CEENQA for 16 years from its founding until 2017, on the boards of the European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme and ENQA, on the Board of AQ Austria and have worked for QA agencies in Germany and Austria.

The HAC has signed a cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Quality agency SKVC. In addition, some HAC members and external expert committee members have been invited as experts to review study programmes in Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, and Kosovo, many of them several times.

The HAC has not conducted evaluations or accreditation of institutions or programmes abroad, with the exception of off-site provision of programmes by Hungarian institutions intended predominantly for Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries.

All in all, the panel was impressed by the evidence of engagement with and participation in a full range of QA activities in higher education both in Hungary and also internationally in specific projects. The HAC has demonstrated leadership in this regard. Both the documentary evidence submitted and discussions held during meetings with the diverse range of stakeholders confirmed the regard in which the agency is held, the extensive range of its QA activities and the achievement of its aims and goals in terms of accreditation of programmes and institutions, and the support the agency has from its key stakeholders (institutions, staff, Ministry, etc.) for the mission and activities of the HAC.

Analysis

The Quality Assurance processes of the HAC are linked to the 2015 ESG and aligned with the NQF (see also ESG 2.1 on this matter).

As the SAR makes explicit, HAC does not decide who the delegating bodies will nominate to membership of its Board (38). The involvement of students has increased in the current Board. The new Board, appointed for a six-year mandate on March 1, 2018, now includes the elected President of the Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates and a delegate from the National Union of Students in Hungary. The panel commended this increase.

At the time of writing the SAR, five of the eight disciplinary committees each included one student and two non-academic stakeholders. During the site visit the panel was informed that on the first meeting of the new Board (March 29, 2018) the two student unions were asked to nominate their candidates for the newly formed committees. Nomination of students by the unions was still in process.

As acknowledged in the SAR, "the scarcity of external stakeholders is a weakness" (SAR 38). Another weakness continues to be the involvement of international stakeholders in the agency's committees. In the meeting with the President and Vice-Presidents of the HAC, the HAC confirmed it was their wish to increase expertise in the agency by including international members in its committees. One barrier

to achieve this goal was the low proficiency in English of staff of institutions and of HAC. Another was the lack of resources suffered in the past.

On another level, training of experts in ex-ante procedures continues to be a problem. Experts just receive a letter of invitation with basic information. This issue is further discussed under standard ESG 2.4.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

Students are partners in the HE process. It is suggested that the HAC continues negotiations with the Educational Authority and the Ministry to include more students on its advisory Boards and that the HAC includes at least one student on each of its eight standing committees.

The panel suggests that the HAC finds ways to involve more non-academic experts in accreditation/evaluation and QA activities and pursues the strategic plan of engaging more foreign experts in its quality assurance activities. Once the budget issue is solved, it is probable that the introduction of English as the language of evaluation procedures in one and a half years (Strategy 2017-2018) will help solve this challenge. The panel suggests that the HAC uses Hungarian-speaking experts living abroad.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

> Standard:
> Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

2013 review recommendation

After comparing the official status of the HAC as established within article 41 of Act of National Education CCIV/2011 to former Higher Education Act of 2005, the 2013 external review panel of the HAC determined that there was a lowering of status: "The independence of HAC is no longer formally mentioned in the law, as in the 2005 Law which declared that HAC is 'an independent body of experts,' but in Government Decree (19/2012, II.22, 4 (1)) it is specifying that the HAC is an independent organization." The review pointed to the "lack of clarity in the distribution of competences between HAC and the Educational Authority regarding the articulation of licensing and accreditation" (SAR 31). The panel concluded that the HAC was Substantially Compliant on this issue but issued no recommendation.

Evidence

The HAC was established in the first Higher Education Act of 1993 and continues to be recognised as a quality assurance agency by all stakeholders. According to the 2011 Higher Education Act, XVIII. 41, 70 (1): "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is a national expert body promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the quality of higher education, scientific research, and the scientific quality of artistic creation, which participates under this Act in procedures relating to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctorate schools." Its official status is set down in Section 70 (3)

of the latter Act: "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is authorised to acquire a non-profit legal status regulated in Act CLXXV of 2011 on the Rights of Association, non-profit status and the operation and funding of Civil Organizations." Section 71 decrees the number of members comprising the HAC, the protocol for the appointment of its president and selection of officials as well as duration of appointments.

Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on QA in HE further stipulates "that the HAC operates in accordance with the ESG and that it may not be directed in the performance of its activities or its financial management" (SAR 39).

The set of regulations governing the operations of the HAC are listed in Annex 3 of the SAR. Besides the legal framework, the HAC has procedures for each of its quality assurance activities published on its webpage.

Analysis

The HAC is formally recognised in national legislation and has an established legal basis. During the site visit the panel confirmed that the distribution of competences between the HAC and Educational Authority was clear: the former passes the accreditation decision and the latter issues a license. According to the SAR, "the Educational Authority is tasked with reviewing the license of an institution every five years, for which it conducts infrastructure capacity reviews and requests the HAC's opinion regarding quality, a practice that started in 2017. For this procedure, which is not linked to the HAC's institutional accreditation cycles, the HAC arrives at its opinion based on its existing documentation, e.g. previous evaluations and accreditations, new programme accreditations and whether they were supported by HAC or not, etc." (SAR 25).

 Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

> Standard:
> Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

2013 review recommendation
The 2013 review report highlighted that although the "HAC operational independence was assured in the previous 2005 Education Act," the 2011 Higher Education Act "does not formally mention this independence but the Government Decree (19/2012, II. 22, 4 (1)) specifies that HAC is an independent organization" (SAR 34). The panel further observed that even though the decisions taken by the HAC were "not directly influenced by the Ministry or any political entity," they were overridden in January 2013 when the Ministry granted licenses to new VET programmes whose quality the HAC had assessed negatively. Likewise, the review pointed to the fact that nine of the members comprising the HAC were delegated by the Minister, who also nominated the President of the agency. While acknowledging that "this system is not unusual in Europe" (SAR 34), the panel considered that it compromised the independence of the agency. According to the review panel, the HAC had been "driven from an independent role into a more consultive one" and deemed the agency was Partially Compliant on criterion 3.6. Since at that time the HAC was negotiating with the Educational Authority a series of amendments to these aspects, the panel recommended to persist in these discussions and

clarify "the links and distribution of competences between the Ministry of Human Resources – Educational Authority and the HAC" (SAR 35).

2015 Partial Review
In the Partial Review issued in January 2015, it was noted that in September 1, 2014, an amendment to the 2011 Higher Education Act was made effective, whereby the independence of HAC was fully acknowledged: "The HAC is an independent national body of experts for the external evaluation of the quality of higher education, scientific research and artistic activity and the internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions, and it contributes its expertise in procedures relating to higher education institutions as defined in this Act" (SAR 12-13). The partial report also informed of a change in the composition of the HAC members: two members, not delegated by the Minister, were added to the HAC. Last, it registered that: "No change was made in the legislation about the right of the Educational Authority or the Minister to disregard the HAC's expert opinion or that of its Board of Appeals" (SAR 13). The decision of the panel on the issue of independence was Substantially Compliant.

Evidence
In the 2014 amendment to the 2011 Higher Education Act and the Government Decree (19/2012, II. 22, 4 (1)) it is specified that the HAC functions independently. Through its website "HAC has been stressing its independence in its activities and decisions" (SAR 40). Published on its website are the agency's procedures and methods as well as the composition of its boards and committees together with a series of by-laws to regulate "conflict of interest and set down that deliberations may not be influenced by any personal or official interest" (SAR 40). The HAC's Code of Ethics explicitly states that experts are not to be influenced by third parties. The regulations of the Board of Appeals are equally designed to avoid conflicts of interest.

In the documentary evidence submitted as part of the SAR and including documents and procedures published on the HAC website and confirmed during discussions the review panel held with members of the HAC Board and with other key stakeholders, it is clear that all procedures and methods for accreditation and evaluation exercises are determined by the HAC Board without interference from other external bodies. Experts for visiting teams are nominated by the HAC in consultation with the Chair of the review panel – also nominated by the President of the HAC. All experts must be approved by the HAC Board before appointment. The eight expert disciplinary committees play a key role in the nomination of experts for ex-ante evaluations and in the definition of the criteria to be used in selecting appropriate experts in the disciplines.

Analysis
As of March 1, 2018, a new Board was appointed (see page 14 for details). Notwithstanding that nine of its members are still delegated by the Ministry, membership is more balanced with respect to academic fields, types of institutions, geography and gender. The Ministry consults with HEIs and other stakeholders in determining its nominations of delegates to the Board. Currently five women sit on the Board of the HAC. In addition, students nominate two representatives.

Although "there has been no legal change regarding the liberty of the Minister to grant licenses following a negative HAC decision" (SAR 40) and to disregard the opinions of the Board of Appeals, the panel was informed that these cases are rare. By law HAC accreditation does not oblige the Educational Authority to license a programme; in practice, however, the Educational Authority always licenses programmes accredited by the HAC. The Minister can ignore a negative accreditation decision by the HAC but cannot change the agency´s decisions. In the meeting with the Secretary of State for Education on May 3, it was confirmed that the HAC has continued to push for legislation that specifies

the reasons for a possible recall of the HAC members by the delegating bodies. According to Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22), the Minister can recall members of the HAC Board, but now specific reasons must be given if a recall is issued. In this way the system becomes accountable. That was not the situation in the past when the Minister could recall members without providing an explanation. Although the legal possibility exists, such a recall has never occurred. The panel also confirmed that the HAC determines its own fee for institutional accreditation and professorial appointment applications.

Evidence suggests that the field of influence of the Ministry has diminished and the HAC has strengthened its organizational and operational independence.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

> Standard:
>
> Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

2013 review recommendation

In the 2013 report, the panel reviewed the publications available on the HAC's website. The panel found that the HAC had "a too limited activity allocated to system-wide analysis." It was explained that "[f]urther developments of these activities are understandably hindered in the current economic situation of HAC and with the resources at disposal" (SAR 28). The panel concluded that the HAC was Substantially Compliant on this criterion and recommended that it maintained "a sufficient level of system-wide analysis, in order to improve cooperation with Educational Authority and other stakeholders" (SAR 29).

Evidence

The evidence submitted by the HAC to support the requirement for publication of analytical and thematic reports consisted of the following publications, available on the HAC website on the Publications tab:

- Accreditation gazettes (in Hungarian). Issued three times a year, these inform the public about events at the HAC and decisions taken by the agency. They provide an overview of the mechanisms in place to assure quality in HEIs.
- Presidents' Reports. Issued every one or two years since 2006, with a break from 2012 till 2017 (English version). They report on the activities, resources and external relations of the agency and inform of changes in the legal environment, procedures for evaluating institutions, programmes, faculty positions, and doctoral schools as well the composition and strategies of advisory bodies, operations of the secretariat and decisions adopted by the HAC.
- Annual reports. They record the work done by the agency, results achieved, difficulties encountered, areas to improve and actions to be taken.
- Disciplinary programme accreditation reports. These reports review individual programmes and offer recommendations.

- Other publications, which include presentations, articles and papers by the President and the staff.

Under the Regulations tab the following documents are available on the agency's website:

- Strategy 2017-2018. It "reflects the current strengths and weaknesses and informs the HAC and the public about the goals and the way forward" (SAR 42).

- Institutional self-evaluation guidelines (2018). This document presents the criteria for assessing compliance with the ESG 2015. It resulted from the analysis conducted by the HAC's QA Committee of the 2017 pilot evaluation experiences.

Analysis

Evidence of thematic analysis can be found in the programme accreditation reports, annual reports and other publications of the staff on the "activities, trends and outlook" of the HAC (SAR 41). The SAR details that "analyses of the evaluated field are conducted for the disciplinary programme accreditation reports. While the gist of these quite extensive reports deals with the analyses, quality findings and recommendations of individual programmes, the introductory part reviews the field, its quality overall, and recommends directions for improvement that are useful for the involved programmes and institutions, the interested public as well as the HAC itself" (SAR 42).

However, the panel finds that the HAC's level of activity in thematic analysis is limited.

During the site visit the President of the HAC acknowledged that while some analysis (see above) has been done on the general findings of the agency's activities, it is still insufficient to be useful beyond the scope of a single process. She assured the panel it is within the plans of the agency to conduct more analyses of a thematic nature, and informed that the report on the pilot accreditation project will be finished and presented at an international conference in November 2018. The newly established QA committee (March 2018) has been assigned responsibility for development of more detailed thematic reports and conducting analysis of the full range of HAC activities over the next five years.

The HAC does reflect on its work and range of accreditation and evaluation activities as a part of its ongoing strategic planning and is aided in this by the International Advisory Board and its discussions. Some of these reflections are published as part of the Annual Reports. HAC plans to increase the level of reflections and publication of the outcomes, led by the QA committee and the HAC Board. The panel understands that the QA Committee charged with conducting analyses of a thematic nature was recently appointed and that the past economic situation of the agency hindered development of this activity. Increase in budget and staff numbers will allow the agency to undertake in-depth thematic analyses and to publish the outcomes. This commitment was welcomed by the panel.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends that the HAC ensures publication of the thematic work under way, disseminates it widely and follows up on the promise to publish reports and conduct more system-wide analyses. These are a key resource in supporting QA and establishing a quality culture.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:
Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

2013 review recommendation

The 2013 report noted the lack of financial resources of the HAC: "The whole budget has considerably decreased since the 2008 Review. The State budget allocation has been reduced almost by half between 2009 and 2011. Then the situation has still been worsening in 2012 with a reduction by half" (32). The panel deemed the HAC Partially Compliant on this criterion and recommended negotiation with the Educational Authority to provide the HAC with the resources needed to carry out its tasks.

2015 partial review recommendation

The 2015 report of the panel of the external partial review of the HAC deemed the HAC Fully Compliant due to:

- The 2014 amendments to the Higher Education Act of 2011. They raised "the regulatory level governing state budget allocation of the HAC from a government decree to the level of a law" (SAR 10).

- The increase in funding that took place in 2013 (155 million HUF), and was retained in 2014. The report informs that "during the site visit in January 2015 it was confirmed that the HAC considers this level of funding sufficient to enable the HAC to plan and carry out its activities in a sustainable manner" (SAR 10).

- Other income sources, besides the amount allocated by the Ministry. According to the panel, "the level of procedural fees that the HAC may charge for services was raised by 60% in April 2013, and, since September 2014, a government decree allows HAC to request fees for evaluating applications for university professor positions. This has been the practice since autumn 2011 but now it is reinforced by legislation and can be regarded as a sustainable income source" (SAR 10-11).

As a result of this, the panel concluded that "[t]he lack of certainty with respect to the level of income and the intentions of the Ministry that was evident in 2013 has now been replaced with a confidence in the ability of the HAC to perform its activities" (SAR 11). No recommendations were made.

Evidence

The Government Decree 19/2012 determines that the President of the HAC has complete discretion over the budget. Decree 12/2013, from the EMMI, regulates administrative fees in higher education procedures and establishes that the HAC may charge fees for the evaluation of new programmes, new institutions and faculty positions. "In accordance with the legislation regulating public expenditure, the HAC has to submit an annual accounting report, which is approved by the Board of Financial Supervisors" (SAR 22). This document is public and available at the agency's website (in Hungarian).

As seen in the SAR (Table 3: HAC budget 2013-November 2017, 22-23), since 2013 state funding has been stable, with a rise of 35 million HUF in 2016. This was a one-time allocation to acquire furniture and enable better IT services. At the time of writing the SAR negotiations between the agency and the

Educational Authority were "ongoing to build the increase into the regular allocation" (SAR 23). At the time of the site visit the panel was informed that negotiations had been successful. The panel was provided with a copy of the 2018 contract with the Ministry that informs of an increase in the budget allocated to the HAC, from 160 million HUF in 2017 to 200 million HUF in 2018. The Minister confirmed to the panel that the increase would be permanent.

Income from the accreditation of new programmes, new doctoral schools and university professor applications has been regular from 2013 to 2018. So have expenditures, the bulk of which continues to correspond to personnel (63.7%), social contributions (13.5%) and materials (22.8%).

Between September 2016 and December 2017, the HAC hired additional staff. According to the SAR, "seven ... staff members (Head of Secretariat, four programme officers, and two administrators) have been hired, and two programme officers' working contracts were changed from part-time to full-time" (SAR 20). During the site visit the panel confirmed that "there is no longer a critical shortage of staff" (SAR 20) and further recruitment was taking place. The agency's offices are situated in a central location of the city. They are certainly spacious and well-equipped with furniture and technology. "IT hardware and software are updated regularly" (SAR 43).

Analysis

The panel was impressed with the physical resources in terms of infrastructure of the HAC. The panel noted the considerable improvement in terms of IT infrastructure and support made possible since the previous review by the allocation of additional funds by the Ministry. This has considerably improved and modernised the means of communication and decision-making of the HAC and its expert committees, and reduced the frequency of face-to-face meetings, thus allowing financial resources to be allocated elsewhere.

It was evident that the increase in allocation of financial resources by the Ministry (referred to in more detail later in this report), and which the Minister confirmed to the panel will be permanent and ongoing, has ensured the sustainability of the activities of the HAC, and allowed, not only appointment of additional permanent staff to the HAC, but continued support for the IT hardware and software. Additionally, the HAC is now allowed under the legislation to charge for some of its activities and thus generate additional income which may be spent as the HAC considers appropriate.

The HAC is also conscious of the need to ensure appropriate staff development activities are in place and operating. That this is happening was confirmed in discussions with management and staff.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

2013 review recommendation

After examining the accountability procedures of the HAC, the panel concluded that the HAC was Fully Compliant on ESG 3.8. It recommended that the agency considered "the results of the annual surveys from all types of stakeholders, for each year, for the elaboration of a system wide analysis over [its]

activity, over a period of 5 years, until the next mandatory external review" (SAR 39). In that analysis, the agency would report "not only the dynamics and changes in opinions of stakeholders, but also the impact of its own activity on the development of higher education in Hungary in accordance with the economic situation of the country" (SAR 39).

Evidence

The criteria and guidelines for all external quality procedures, revised in line with the ESG 2015, are available on the HAC's website, in addition to the By-Laws approved by the Minister of Human Capacities on April 10, 2015, on the responsibilities and duties of the members of the agency, its staff and its experts. Also public are the agency's mission statement and the values it holds, its Code of Ethics and its system of regulations for publishing public information. Self-assessment reports on the agency's conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA and annual reports on its activities have been published on the HAC's website. Self-assessment reports have been published since 2007. Annual reports have been published since 2001. Since 2003 the HAC also publishes annual survey feedbacks from stakeholders. Other documents are for internal use only (e.g. the Programme Officers' Handbook for the Secretariat, in hardcopy).

Important sources of feedback are the surveys of students at the evaluated institutions, of visiting team members and of institutions. The feedback from the last annual survey of HEIs and site visit teams, completed in 2015, was used to revise the guidelines for the fourth cycle of institutional accreditations beginning in 2017. In addition, the feedback from the survey of HEIs conducted in the spring of 2017 prompted the decision to hold forums of diverse topics to better inform stakeholders. The HAC has used questionnaires from stakeholders, its boards and the Secretariat to elaborate a SWOT analysis. The panel commends the agency for its honest SWOT analysis and the meaningful SAR submitted. They provide a clear picture of the organisation and the steps it needs to take to move forward.

The HAC follows up regularly on the recommendations made by the IAB to the agency. This Board meets once a year at the HAC offices and writes a report. Since 2016 the HAC publishes a formal feedback to the reports issued by the IAB. Upon its recommendations the HAC has pushed for legislation on recalling members, has achieved more gender balance on the Board and has started to update its experts database, weeding out inactive members and retaining those "believed to be valuable and effective contributors" (SAR 53). In the meeting with two members of the IAB, the panel confirmed that there is more work to be done in the internationalisation of the expert pool.

Analysis

The HAC conducts surveys on many of its procedures and discusses the results of the feedback from stakeholders in staff meetings, plenary meetings of the HAC Board and the HAC's QA Committee, in charge of reviewing feedback from surveys. It is clear that recurring recommendations have been used to rethink strategies, goals and procedures. The recently agreed and published strategic plan for the agency, covering the period 2017-2018, and the action plan developed as a consequence of this strategy emphasise the need for transparency and accountability in all activities and focus specifically on the benefits to the public of a focus on improvement of quality in all higher education activities. The new HAC Board appointed in 2018 plans to undertake a review of the strategy and updating, if required, within 2018.

Internal and external feedback mechanisms are not entirely in place within the agency. The processes of examining data and giving feedback to all concerned are neither regularised nor formalised. The panel understands that the HAC's QA Committee was recently appointed (March 2018) and has not had the time to develop a review pattern, and that plans are in place to ensure this happens over the next year. It also understands that "[t]he transient state of the HAC in the past two-three years has constrained the HAC's human resources to the main activities described in [the current] self-evaluation report" (SAR 68).

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends that the agency ensures methodical follow-up on and feedback from all procedures and all types of stakeholders, conducts systematic analysis of data regularly, informs users of improvements and developments from feedback and prepares the aggregated system-wide analysis on the impact of its own activity suggested by the former review panel in 2013.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

> Standard:
>
> Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

2013 Review Recommendation

The panel noted "that the mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years is respected" (SAR 39) and issued no recommendations.

Evidence

The HAC has undergone two cyclical reviews, in 2008 and 2013, with a partial review in 2015, for ENQA membership focussed on compliance with the ESG and ENQA criteria. According to the SAR: "The reviews provide an important instrument for HAC for its own self-reflection. The self-assessment process involving a number of stakeholders allows for an overview of the past and reflections on strengths and weaknesses, while the panel reports uncover these or other strengths and weaknesses and provide direction for the way forward" (SAR 46).

Analysis

The HAC undergoes cyclical external reviews of its activities at least once every five years to ensure that its efforts advance the culture of quality higher education. The external review includes a report on its compliance with the ESG criteria.

 Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

> Standard:

> External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

2013 Review Recommendation

The panel reviewed the HAC's guidebook for institutional accreditation, the methodology used by the agency in external quality assurance procedures and the standards for programme accreditation. The panel highlighted that "[i]n addition to the guidelines of ESG Part I, the HAC had elaborated detailed guidelines and institutional background documents for each standard" (SAR 17). The HAC was deemed Fully Compliant on this criterion. No recommendations were given.

Evidence

The activities of the HAC are described on pages 15 to 17 of this report. The standards of Part 1 of the ESG are included in the criteria and procedures used for:

- Initial (ex-ante) accreditation of new HEIs.
- Accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles.
- Initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of VET, bachelor and master programmes.
- Initial accreditation of VET, bachelor and master programmes.
- Accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in disciplinary clusters.
- Initial accreditation of new doctoral schools.
- Accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles.

"Initial accreditation of new institutions and institutional accreditation in five-year cycles is based on the Higher Education Act, which outlines the requirements for HEIs regarding staff, organisational structure, tangible and financial assets and regulations. Of these, the HAC reviews the internal documents, the staff and infrastructure necessary for the planned educational programmes, and whether the QA system ensures their quality and sustainability. In the past ten years, no applications for a new HEI have been submitted. Five existing HEIs were accredited in 2017 under new regulations based on the ESG 2015" (SAR 47).

New programmes in institutions commence in two phases. Essentially the process is a 2–step process, presented in the SAR and in the HAC documents as two separate types of activity but during the site visit the panel established that in reality the two activities (1) initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements and 2) initial accreditation are two phases in a single process – i.e. accreditation of a new programme. Thus, the panel evaluated these activities as being parts of the same ex-ante activity. Thus, the mapping tables at the end of this report for these procedures should be considered together.

In the first phase or step, the HAC examines if the intended learning outcomes of the proposed programme are aligned to the Hungarian NQF. "The HAC also considers whether the education and learning outcome framework requirements are comparable to similar programmes nationally and internationally and have the capacity to lead to high-quality study programmes" (SAR 47).

In the second phase, the HAC evaluates the application for accreditation submitted by the institution. "The application must be approved by the institutional senate, which requires that the HEI considered the ESG Part 1" (SAR 47). While "programme evaluation and accreditation encompass the programme-

specific standards, [...] re-accreditation builds on the criteria for initial accreditation, which in turn builds on the framework requirements for the same programme and level" (SAR 48).

"Accreditation of Bachelor and Master programmes in disciplinary clusters is conducted on request of the Minister and builds on the criteria in effect for new programmes" (SAR 48).

The qualifications of the core teaching staff and PhD supervisors of doctoral schools are reviewed every six months. As to the initial accreditation of doctoral schools, basic criteria are set down in the Higher Education Act and Government Decree 387/2015 (XII.19)."The law determines the university senate has the right to establish a doctoral school and has to adhere to the relevant ESG" (SAR 48). Although reaccreditation of doctoral schools takes place every five years, "one and three-year accreditation has been given if improvements were necessary but could be expected to be eliminated by the deadline. The criteria are basically the same as for the accreditation of new doctoral schools" (SAR 48).

Annex 1 of the SAR summarises in a table format how standards 1.1-1.10 are addressed in the agency's criteria and processes for institutions and programmes. Each standard is addressed separately for each different type of review (Annex 5 of this report includes Annex 1 of SAR).

Analysis

The criteria for institutional accreditation, conducted every five years, contain the ten standards of the ESG Part 1. For the initial accreditation of new institutions standards 1.9 and 1.10 do not apply.

The framework requirements are based on ESG 1.2. The HAC checks that the programmes are designed to meet the objectives set in them, that the qualifications resulting from them refer to the correct level of the NQF, and that they reflect the purposes of HE of the Council of Europe. The HAC also checks that programmes are different enough from other similar programmes to warrant separate framework requirements (SAR 47).

In the initial accreditation of VET, bachelor and master programmes, the HAC reviews the university senate's resolution and makes sure these programmes are part of the institutional QA system (ESG 1.1). The HAC assesses:

- Relevance of disciplines that make up the programme and intended learning outcomes (ESG 1.2).
- Alignment of teaching and learning processes with educational levels, adequacy of learning support tools and learning approach (ESG 1.3).
- Requirement that ECTS credits to enter undergraduate and graduate programmes are in line with the NQF (ESG 1.4).
- Competence of teachers and relevance of scientific and professional qualifications (ESG 1.5).
- Infrastructure (facilities, library, IT), scientific background of programme and resources to mentor talented students (ESG 1.6).
- Analysis and use of information and regulations pertinent for the effective management of the programme (ESG 1.7).
- Clarity and accessibility of information (ESG 1.8).
- Ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the programme (ESG 1.9).
- Cyclical follow-up procedures (ESG 1.10).

The same criteria are used for the evaluation of bachelor and master programmes in disciplinary clusters. Standards 1.1-1.8 are relevant in the initial accreditation of doctoral schools. In the processes of their re-accreditation all the standards apply.

The panel considers that the HAC supports institutional responsibility for QA and ensures the link between internal and external QA adhering to the standards and guidelines of Part 1 of the ESG.

 Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

> Standard:
>
> External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2013 review recommendation

On ESG 2.2. (Development of External Quality Assurance Processes) the panel recommended that "[e]xternal stakeholders should be more involved and trained for these processes, also foreign experts as much as possible" (SAR 19). On ESG 2.4 (Processes Fit for Purpose) the panel recommended to amplify the "level of training and provision of resources for the experts involved in ex-ante accreditation procedures." The panel emphasised the need that students participate in all processes and advised to allow more time for site visits for institutional accreditation. The panel endorsed "the orientations of the 2008 ENQA review to move towards an institutional, ex-post approach to quality," and invited the HAC "to consider how it can best keep and assert its leading role in quality assurance of higher education, in the context of the New Higher Education Act, in cooperation with all the other bodies and stakeholders" (SAR 23).

Evidence

After the first cycle of accreditations in the mid-2000s, the HAC changed its procedures and separated ex-post institutional from programme accreditation: "Up until the mid-2000s institutional accreditation procedures involved all programmes in one process. The workload was enormous, and although during the site visits programmes were selected based on guidelines, not all programmes could be scrutinised in equal depth" (SAR 49). From then onwards programmes were evaluated in clusters. This system "is to be continued on request of the Minister" (SAR 49). The Minister stated that there are no plans for new cluster accreditations.

Guidelines for institutional accreditation were modified at the end of the third institutional accreditation cycle on account of the introduction of the ESG 2015. Before these guidelines were set up they were tested in a pilot procedure on five HEIs and the feedback gained from it was included in the finalisation of the evaluation method. The HAC's new criteria place emphasis on the development of internal quality programmes by the HEIs. According to the "Self-assessment Guidebook," the goal is "to provide assurance that the HE in question performs its activities in line with the ESG 2015, has a quality assurance system in place which monitors and assesses compliance with the standards on an ongoing basis, and is actively engaged in formulating, based on the assessment results, the actions and processes to promote the implementation of the standards" (2).

The guidelines have altered the focus of the self-evaluation report issued by the HEI in three other respects. Rather than a piecemeal approach, it must integrate information using a holistic approach ("the new institutional procedure focuses on the whole institution and less on the faculties" (SAR 50). Instead of "extensive descriptions" of practices (SAR 50), it "must provide facts and evidence coupled with analysis" (SAR 50). Last: "In addition to enforcing the PDCA," it "has to focus more on uncovering good practices and areas for development at institutions. In some cases these were touched very generally" (SAR 51).

The guidebook explains the outcomes of accreditation, establishes the period of its validity and informs of the purposes of the follow-up. During the accreditation process, the HAC "supports institutions in preparing for the certification, advising them on compiling the institutional self-assessment document which forms the basis of certification" ("Self-assessment Guidebook" 2).

Analysis

As the 2013 review panel recommended, the HAC is moving towards an institutional approach to quality. Changes in institutional and programme accreditation clearly support the development of quality culture and QA. In addition, they have alleviated the workload of both the agency and the stakeholder. As noted above, all the procedures, guidelines and criteria for evaluation and accreditation are accessible from the HAC's Hungarian website, with a select few also available in English.

The external QA processes have been developed through consultation with academic stakeholders. This consultation was positively considered by members of disciplinary committees, who stated they were happy with the changes in the procedures of the HAC, visiting team members, heads of reviewed HEIs, students involved in recent HAC evaluations and rectors, as the panel found during meetings.

The panel concludes that the methodologies designed by the HAC are in general fit for their purpose with the exception of the twice-yearly evaluation of doctoral schools. This review does not include site visits, it is a desk-based exercise assessing whether the number of staff and their qualifications meet the requirements for doctoral schools. Considering the proliferation of doctoral schools (currently the number has escalated to 190), the panel believes that evaluating them twice a year is a significant burden on the HAC. In 2017, the HAC's IAB recommended the cessation of this type of review acknowledging "the HAC's aim to be supportive of quality enhancement and to acknowledge the responsibility of HEIs for their own quality" (SAR 53). The panel was of the opinion that doctoral schools should be evaluated as part of the evaluation of an institution. The panel was informed that the agency's new Board discussed this issue at their first meeting, but no decision has been made yet.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends that the practice of evaluating doctoral schools every six months be discontinued. It is unnecessary, time consuming, and resource consuming. If this practice remains, the panel is of the opinion, with which the HAC agrees, that it should be the mission of the National Doctoral Council and not the HAC to assess the qualifications of the faculty in doctoral schools. In order to ensure effectiveness, the panel also recommends that the HAC considers including the evaluation of doctoral schools with the institutional evaluation procedure.

On another level, the panel recommends that non-academic stakeholders, e.g. representatives of civil society, labour unions, entrepreneurs and regional/local authorities, together with international experts be consulted and involved in the design and improvement of the QA procedures of the HAC.

Panel conclusion: Substantially Compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:
External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include: - a self-assessment or equivalent - an external assessment normally including a site visit - a report resulting from the external assessment - a consistent follow-up

2013 review recommendation

As to ESG 2.6 (Follow-up procedures), the panel opined that "[t]he HAC has follow-up procedures" (SAR 25) but noted that "the new changes of Higher Education Law as regards to HAC tasks, combined with a lack of resources might not allow for following-up activities in the third round of institutional accreditation for the 5-years schedule 2010/2011 - 2014/2015" (SAR 26). The panel pointed to "a systemic risk that leading boards of institutions and programmescoordinators may be less concerned with follow-up recommendations and with the implementation of quality improvement plans" as "a result of the sector knowing the decisions of HAC might be overturned by the Educational Authority" (SAR 25). The panel deemed the HAC Substantially Compliant on this criterion and recommended "that HAC addresses the problem of systemic risk, above mentioned, together with the Ministry, the Educational Authority, the National Conference of Rectors and the National Doctoral Council" (SAR 26).

Evidence

The ex-ante accreditation of new institutions and doctoral schools as well as the initial evaluation of programmes are conducted through databases TIR and doktori.hu. The procedures include a report prepared according to very detailed application criteria determined by the HAC, a report by expert evaluators appointed by the HAC, and follow-up, but do not include site visits. "The HAC believes that organising site visits for each of these evaluations would not be cost-effective for HAC and for the institution since the fundamental requirements can be evaluated based on the applications submitted" (SAR 52). "For each procedure, two expert evaluators are suggested by the relevant expert committee either from the existing pool of experts or are entered into the pool/database if they meet the pre-defined criteria" (SAR 52).

In the accreditation of institutions and cluster programmes, a self-assessment report is prepared and submitted to the site visit teams. Site visits "take two to three days for institutions and one day for each of the programmes in the cluster" (SAR 52). After the visit the team prepares a report that is sent to the rector for factual accuracy, then to the relevant expert committee and eventually to the HAC Board for a final decision.

"All ex-post evaluation reports include recommendations for improvement and may contain conditions to be met by a set deadline, usually one or two years. All institutions have to submit either an activity plan or a description on actions taken on the HAC's recommendations, and in some cases the HAC decides to conduct a site visit to check on them. Most often, the HAC follows up on these

plans without site visits by discussing the submitted actions or action plans in its expert committees and the HAC Board, which approves the action plans" (SAR 52).

Analysis

The systemic risk the review panel referred to in 2013 has disappeared on account of the increase of resources of the HAC and the legal clarification of its tasks in relation to the Ministry and the Educational Authority. The President of the HAC confirmed that the agency provides follow-up procedures for all reviews, and that institutions and programmes have to submit action plans where they inform about the actions taken by them on the recommendations made by the visiting team.

In the meeting with external experts the panel was informed that they were comfortable with the system used for ex-ante procedures but considered that site visits were sometimes too brief and commented on the need for longer site visits. Students also believed that the schedule for site visits was compressed and there was not enough time to delve into the workings of the institutions.

The panel supports the decision of the HAC not to require site visits for ex-ante evaluations, agreeing with the HAC that the information submitted by the institution, in accordance with the guidelines and criteria laid down by the HAC, is sufficient to allow a decision to be made. Site visits are a core part of ex-post accreditation procedures.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests lengthening the site visits in institutional evaluations to allow sufficient time for meetings and in-depth discussions with the different groups of interviewees.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

> Standard:
>
> External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

2013 review recommendation

Concerning ESG 3.7 (External Quality Assurance Criteria and Processes Used by the Members), the panel deemed the HAC Substantially Compliant and recommended to involve foreign experts and increase the representation of students and their participation in the activities of the HAC (SAR 37).

Evidence

Selection of standing expert committees on disciplines, of site visit teams and of all external experts is regulated in the HAC By-Laws and is published on the HAC website (http://www.mab.hu). Experts are required to sign a statement confirming no conflict of interest with the institution/programme undergoing evaluation. All experts and Board members are expected to familiarise themselves with the HAC Code of Ethics document and its contents.

In ex-ante evaluations experts are selected on account of their "expertise in the field [to assess] and experience in teaching at a HEI or professional experience" (SAR 53). In this procedure there is no formal training. Experts "receive a letter of invitation, which contains the basic information on the process and focus of the evaluation" (SAR 53). If the two evaluators involved arrive at contradictory

conclusions a third expert is invited to assess the application. "The evaluators are anonymous, only the expert committee chair and the assigned programme officer know the identity. The reason for anonymity is to ensure the objectivity of the expert. The received, anonymous evaluations are subsequently discussed in the expert committee and motioned on to the HAC Board for further discussion and decision" (SAR 52).

Students are not involved in ex-ante evaluations, but they participate fully in ex-post evaluations, as full members of site visit teams. As a rule, the site visit teams include at least one student "recommended by the National Union of students, which conducts QA training for students in their pool" (SAR 54) and a QA expert. Training of teams takes up half a day and consists of "a discussion on the focus of the HAC criteria, the ESG and its elements, the evaluation procedure and the visiting teams' responsibilities, an analysis of the self-evaluation report, issues to be clarified at the institution, materials to be submitted prior to the visit and at the site visit, and what presentations to ask of the institution of their operations" (SAR 54).

"International experts have been involved in the HAC's evaluations in the past in areas where no local expert could be found or there was a conflict in smaller fields. This was especially the case with religious programmes and institutions following regime change in the 1990s, when these were newly set up" (SAR 54). They have also been involved in the recent accreditation of the Central European University. It is within the agency's strategy "to conduct the accreditation of doctoral schools with international experts" (SAR 54) and introduce "English as the language of evaluation procedures [...] as soon as the necessary human resources (academics and staff) are attained" (SAR 55).

Analysis

The panel has some comments on the anonymity of experts, the involvement of foreign experts as well as students and training.

Throughout the visit, interviewees repeated that Hungary is a small country and that preventing applicants from knowing the identity of evaluators ensured the objectivity of the process. The panel believes that the anonymity of experts in ex-ante evaluations is problematic insofar as it precludes that evaluators become answerable for their decisions. According to the Higher Education Act of 2011, "the identity of participating experts" in the evaluation and accreditation procedures of the HAC must be "publicly available" (XVIII.41,70).

As seen above (ESG 3.1), involvement of foreign experts continues to be an issue. Concerning students, their representation on the HAC Board and their engagement in the evaluation activities of the agency has increased. Still, more work needs to be done in terms of fostering their participation in the tasks of the HAC and including them in all procedures and expert committees.

Since 2013 there has been no change in the training of experts. Training for ex-ante evaluations continues to be absent or informal and training for ex-post procedures is very brief. Although team members declared in the meeting of May 3 that they are fully satisfied with the HAC and its work embedding a new quality culture within institutions, they conceded that the training that prepared visiting teams was insufficient. The HAC is well aware of this situation and intends to organise a training system (SAR 54) in the immediate future, taking advantage of the increased resources made available by the Ministry.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends:

- Giving up anonymity and invisibility of its experts for ex-ante procedures in order to protect the accountability and transparency of the system. It is essential that reports include the names of the experts involved. This will increase the trust of the public in the agency.
- That foreign experts are included not only in the evaluation of religious programmes, foreign-language universities and doctoral schools but in all visiting panels and disciplinary committees. It is important to rely on outside QA experience for comparative analysis and exchange of good practices.
- That students are included in all ex-ante evaluations and are actively involved in all processes and decisions.
- That the HAC increases the volume of training of experts and standardises the method of training according to the purpose and type of the evaluation activity.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2013 review recommendation

On ESG 2.3 (Criteria for Decisions) the panel considered that the HAC was Fully Compliant. Nevertheless, it recommended the agency to clarify "in negotiation with the Ministry, the distribution of tasks and the adequate timetable and resources required for the new VET programmes procedure, in order to ensure its credibility and sustainability." In the report it was added that: "In improving this new QA procedure, HAC should pay special attention to the European VET tools and programmes, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) and sectoral approaches" (SAR 21).

Evidence

Each of the eleven activities conducted by the HAC are performed according to explicit guidelines and criteria, all published on the agency's website. Given that "some activities build on a set of criteria for another procedure" (SAR 55), criteria overlap and depend on each other. These are applied consistently and revised periodically in order to take new developments of QA into consideration. Most significant recent changes in the criteria utilised by the agency are the following:

- In 2015 the criteria and procedures for the accreditation of joint programmes (in place since 2011) were amended so that "[t]hey are evaluated according to the criteria for Hungarian programmes whereby the programme content is considered as a whole, in addition to criteria for the cooperation agreement between the partners, the type of degree issued and the QA system of the programme." According to the SAR, "[n]o legislation has yet been passed to ratify the *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, and the HAC has not yet adapted its procedures in this regard" (SAR 56).

- In 2016 the education and learning outcome requirements for VET, bachelor and master programmes were revised by the Ministry through disciplinary expert committees. New requirements "focus much more than the earlier ones on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, autonomy and responsibility, in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework" (SAR 56). The HAC considers this revision to be an improvement in that it favours "qualitative judgment" (SAR 24) instead of quantitative measurement.

- In 2018, regarding the criteria for accepting foreign accreditation, the HAC adopted the resolution to recognise the accreditation procedure "by an ENQA member agency or one listed in EQAR or others outside the EEA" (SAR 56).

- In 2017 the HAC issued the revised institutional accreditation guidebook ("Self-Assessment Guidebook") wherein the criteria for evaluation and accreditation were aligned with the ESG 2015.

The guidelines for the different procedures and activities of the HAC contain instructions for evaluators and the expert discipline committees on the information required, including reasons with evidence to be provided. Training is provided to site visit teams, detailed guidelines and criteria to be met are defined and the programme officers of HAC, who overview the process and applications, ensure consistency of evaluation and accreditation outcomes. The programme officers also check that all criteria are considered and reported on, and that evidence is provided to support the arguments and judgements made. This is an important aspect of the quality assurance of HAC decisions. Programme officers also provide guidance and advice to institutions, as well as to members of evaluation panels, on the guidelines and criteria.

Currently the VET programmes procedure is performed occasionally by the HAC. At the time of the site visit in 2013, VET programmes had just been introduced and the agency was immersed in the evaluation of 230 applications. This was a major point of consideration by the ENQA review panel in the 2013 review. The volume of evaluation of VET programme has decreased substantially over the years: "only six applications were submitted in 2016 and nine in 2017" (SAR 24). Thus it is clear that these programmes and their evaluations are no longer a major cause of concern for HAC.

Analysis

Overlapping of criteria ensures internal consistency in the sense that it shows that the agency integrates various evaluation procedures (e.g., initial accreditation of new institutions involve programme accreditation, education and learning framework requirements constitute the basis for the initial accreditation of programmes, (SAR 55)). In the interests of accuracy and reliability, the agency revises its criteria according to the evolution of QA in European HE, in agreement with legal regulations. The panel concludes that outcomes of external QA are based on updated, pre-defined and publicly available criteria. It is obvious that QA is in transition in Hungary and that the HAC is assisting institutions in developing a QA mindset, merging national requirements for education with the ESG and overall in pursuing development of a quality culture in higher education institutions.

The panel noted that all procedures are clearly defined with detailed guidelines and criteria established, and are in accordance with current legislation. However, there is a level of complexity which can be confusing for institutions and in particular for those charged with responsibility for preparing documentation for evaluation and accreditation exercises within institutions. The panel commends the efforts by the HAC and government to ensure currency of QA procedures in line with

European norms and standards, but recognises that not all staff in institutions would be as familiar with these evolving requirements.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel has two suggestions:

- In order to ease external QA of joint programmes, it suggests the HAC adopts and adapts the procedures of the present *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*.

- In order to facilitate the navigation of institutions through laws, decrees, standards and guidelines, it suggests the HAC issues a guidebook that compiles all the relevant information.

Panel Conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2013 review recommendation

On Reporting (ESG 2.5) the panel assessed the accessibility of all documents on the HAC website and considered that "accessibility of full information [was] more of an issue when it [came] to the catalogues of programmes, published by the Educational Authority." The panel recommended that HAC ensured full communication of reports to all stakeholders and that it used "clearer signposts to its Web English version." The panel concluded that "[t]ransparency through coherent and reliable information of the public and the students requires that HAC's decisions should be included also in the Educational Catalogue" (SAR 25).

Evidence

Ex-ante evaluation reports contain the evaluators' "judgments on the various criteria for the procedure together with the explanation of their conclusions" (SAR 57). Before a resolution is passed, reports are discussed in the relevant expert committee and the HAC Board. Full reports are published together with decisions on the agency's website.

Reports in institutional accreditation are "extensive." The site visit team is presented with a template and instructed to support their findings with evidence and offer recommendations. "The final report contains a statement about the deadline for actions to be taken, when a follow-up evaluation will be conducted" (SAR 57). Responsibility for these reports rests on the Chairs of the site visit teams. Programme officers edit the document and make sure that all criteria are tackled. "Another HAC staff member is responsible for checking the final draft for clarity and consistency" (SAR 57). During the

visit the panel confirmed that both positive and negative institutional reports are published on the agency's website.

Much the same procedure operates for the reports issued in the accreditation of programme clusters. "While the gist of these quite extensive reports deals with the analyses, quality findings and recommendations of individual programmes, the introductory part reviews the field, its quality overall, and recommends directions for improvement that are useful for the involved programmes and institutions, the interested public as well as the HAC itself" (SAR 42). These reports are also posted on the agency's website.

Analysis

All documents are accessible on the Hungarian version of the agency's website. Reports for ex-ante evaluation, ex-post evaluation and follow-up abide by the format, principles and structure required by the HAC.

Following the 2013 review the HAC introduced a new section on its Hungarian website with information for stakeholders about accreditation criteria and processes. The Hungarian website was restructured and the agency has plans to improve the English version.

As to accessibility of accreditation information in the catalogues of programmes published by the Educational Authority, the panel was informed that the Educational Authority has agreed to provide a link on its page to the agency's website and that negotiations continue on this subject.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests that, given the extension of the reports issued for institutional and programme cluster accreditation, the HAC prepares an executive summary of each visit easily accessible to the public in terms of language and outcomes.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

> Standard:
>
> Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

2013 review recommendation

The panel "found an issue of concern with respect to appeals and the lack of certainty that all appeals are referred to the Appeals Board." The panel reported that "[t]here are distinct processes for appeals concerning applications from doctoral schools, HEIs and university professor applications" (SAR 36). The panel considered "that it should be made much more explicit to all stakeholders what are and what are not the responsibilities of the Appeals Board and its position vis-a-vis the Educational Authority and Ministry of Human Resources" (SAR 37).

Evidence

The Board of Appeals of the HAC consists of three members nominated and appointed by the Minister. The members choose the chair. "In its operations, the Board follows regulations that set down the types of cases to be heard and the procedures" (SAR 58). During the meeting with the chair, one of

the members of the Board and the programme officer assigned to it on May 2, the panel confirmed that appeals may come from the Rector of a HEI or the Minister and may be forwarded either to the Educational Authority or the HAC.

"The Board reviews the appeal against the same HAC standards and criteria, focusing on the grounds for appeal described by the applicant in the letter of appeal and the documentation used for the HAC decision. The Board may also decide to invite HAC members for a hearing in order to have more information about the background of decisions discussed. The decision may be twofold: either the board grants the appeal and thus overturns the HAC's decision, or it retains the HAC's original decision" (SAR 58). The final resolution is uploaded on the website and the applicant is informed in a letter.

In the site visit the panel was informed that from 2012 to 2017 one third of the 71 appeals from institutions was granted. Although the Minister can overturn the decision of the Board he cannot change it. The panel confirmed that this has not happened in cases of institutional accreditation.

"Complaints are submitted to HAC infrequently and do not concern HAC procedures, rather they are individual occurrences at HEIs where complainants turn to HAC if they consider their case a quality issue. As such are handled on a case by case basis. They may reach HAC by letter or mail or may be telephone enquiries, and are handled by the Head of Secretariat or the President. In the majority of cases, beyond trying to help the complainant by suggesting where to turn to for remedy, the HAC notes these issues and marks them for scrutiny in the next evaluation procedure. In some cases, the HAC has turned to the rector of the institution for clarification on the issue" (SAR 58).

Analysis

There are distinct processes for appeals depending on the type of evaluation (institutional, faculty and of doctoral schools). Information about procedures and the composition of the Board is available on the agency's webpage. The panel considers that appeal processes are implemented adequately by the HAC and carried out consistently according to regulations.

The HAC, however, does not have a clear, structured and effective complaints process. Complaints reach the agency through diverse means and are handled desultorily through various channels. During discussions with the HAC staff and representatives of HEIs the panel observed that there was some confusion as to precisely what is meant by a 'complaint'. According to ESG 2015 standard 2.7 is understood to include the following definitions:

> A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.

> In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.

In accordance with ESG 2.7 it is clear that there should be a well-defined and formalised procedure allowing HEIs to state dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out (experts, agency staff etc.), even if the final decision is positive and HEI's do not question the final outcome through the appeals procedure.

Complaints are a basic strategic resource. They illustrate how well standards are achieved from the point of view of stakeholders, help examine the way QA policies are implemented and may assist in improving the service provided by the agency.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends that the HAC develops a policy of complaints and communicates to the public how they will be handled.

Panel Conclusion: substantially compliant

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

The panel commends the HAC for:

ESG 3.1: (1) its participation in an extensive range of QA activities in higher education both in Hungary and also internationally in specific projects; and (2) the increase of the number of students in its decision-making processes.
ESG 3.5: the successful achievement of upping the budget allocation from the EMMI. The panel considers that the budget of the agency is adequate. It will allow conducting more thematic analyses and employing international experts in the evaluation processes.
ESG 3.6: its honest SWOT analysis and the meaningful SAR submitted. They provide a clear picture of the organisation and the steps it needs to take to move forward.
ESG 2.5: its efforts to ensure currency of QA procedures in line with European norms and standards.

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered, the review panel concludes that in the performance of its functions, the HAC is, overall, in substantial compliance with the ESG. The panel has found the HAC to be substantially compliant with four of the ESG and partially compliant with one of the ESG.

ESG 3.1: Fully compliant
ESG 3.2: Fully compliant
ESG 3.3: Fully compliant
ESG 3.4: Substantially compliant
Recommendations: the HAC should ensure publication of the thematic work under way, disseminate it widely and follow up on the promise to publish reports and conduct more system-wide analyses.
ESG 3.5: Fully compliant
ESG 3.6: Substantially compliant
Recommendations: the HAC should ensure methodical follow-up on and feedback from all procedures and all types of stakeholders; (2) conduct systematic analyses of data regularly; (3) inform users of improvements and developments from feedback; and (4) prepare the aggregated system-wide analysis on the impact of its own activity suggested in 2013 by former review panel.
ESG 3.7: Fully compliant
ESG 2.1: Fully compliant
ESG 2.2: Substantially compliant
Recommendations: the HAC should (1) discontinue the practice of evaluating doctoral schools every six months; (2) consider including the evaluation of doctoral schools within the institutional evaluation procedure; and (3) involve non-academic stakeholders and international experts in the design and improvement of its QA procedures.
ESG 2.3: Fully compliant
ESG 2.4: Partially compliant
Recommendations: the HAC should (1) give up anonymity and invisibility of its experts for ex-ante procedures; (2) involve foreign experts in all visiting panels and disciplinary committees; (3) ensure the involvement of students in ex-ante evaluations and in all processes and decisions; (4) increase the training of experts; and (5) standardise the method of training according to the purpose and type of evaluation activity.
ESG 2.5: Fully compliant
ESG 2.6: Fully compliant

ESG 2.7: Substantially compliant
Recommendations: the HAC should develop a policy of complaints and communicate to the public how complaints will be handled.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The panel would like to make some suggestions which may be taken into account in reflection on further development of the HAC. They have already been discussed in previous sections. In relation to ESG 3.1, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6, the panel suggests the following:

ESG 3.1: that the HAC (1) includes more students on its advisory Boards and at least one student on each of its eight standing committees; (2) finds ways to involve more non-academic experts in accreditation/evaluation and QA activities; and (3) pursues the strategic plan of engaging more foreign experts in its QA activities.

ESG 2.3: that the HAC lengthens the site visits in institutional evaluations to allow sufficient time for meetings and in-depth discussions with different groups of interviewees.

ESG 2.5: that the HAC (1) adopts and adapts the procedures of the present *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, and (2) issues a guidebook that compiles all the relevant information concerning laws, decrees, standards and guidelines.

ESG 2.6: that the HAC prepares an executive summary of each visit easily accessible to the public in terms of language and outcomes.

ANNEXES

01.05.2018					
HOTEL					
16.00-20.00	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for day I	Panel prepares for following day			Description/history of the Higher Education system in which HAC operates. Description of the history and role of Quality Assurance in Hungarian Higher Education.
17.00 - 18.00	A pre-visit meeting with the agency contact person to clarify elements related to the overall system and context				
02.05.2018					
HAC OFFICES: HAC MEMBERS, STAFF, COMMITTEES					
TIMING	**TOPIC**	**PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW**			**ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED**
8.30-9.00	**Review panel's private meeting**				
9.00-9.45	HAC president and vice-presidents	Valéria Csépe	HAC president		Appointment, 2017-2018 strategic plan, 2018 budget, internationalization of HAC
		Gábor Hamza	vice-president		
		László Hunyady	vice-president		
9.55-10.35	Meeting with the team responsible for preparation of the self-assessment report	Gyula Bakacsi	member SER team		Review process, work method employed and management of external review
		Tamás Kaizinger	student member SER team		
		Krisztina Rozsnyai	programme officer, foreign affairs		
10.35-10.50	**Review panel's private discussion**				
10.50-11.20	Quality Assurance Committee and Strategy Committee	József Topár	chair, QA Committee and member of Strategy Committee		Revised Accreditation guidebook, function and organization of strategy committee
		András Háry	member, QA Committee		

		Gyöngyvér Hervainé Szabó	member, QA Committee		
		Ákos Jobbágy	chair, Strategy Committee		
		Gyula Bakacsi	member, QA team		
11.30-12.15	Members and Head of Secretariat	Ágnes Mosolygóné Gődény	Head of Secretariat		Daily work, administrative support, databases
		Ágnes Bálint	programme officer, medical, sport and social sciences		
		Erika Bruckmann, Terézia Hernáth	administrator, programme officer, technical and natural sciences		
		Imola Juhász	programme officer, theology, agriculture		
12.15-12.50	**Lunch (panel only)**				
12.50-13.35	HAC members who are chairs or representatives of expert committees for disciplines	Gyula Bakacsi	Sub-chair, Social Sciences Committee		Accreditation process, foreign institutions after 2011 Higher Education Act, inclusion of students and training of experts
		László L. Kiss	HAC member, chair, Natural Sciences Committee		
		László T. Kóczy	chair, Technical Sciences Committee		
		Ferenc Gazdag	former chair		
		Melinda Kovács	chair, Agriculture Committee		
13.45-14.30	Members of standing committee on doctoral school/professor applications	Gábor Hamza	chair, Standing Committee on University Professor and Doctoral School Applications		Initial accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities and accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles
		Ferenc Gazdag	member		
		László T. Kóczy	member		
		László L. Kiss	vice		

Timing	Topic	Persons for interview			Issues to be discussed
		Valéria Csépe	member		
		László Hunyady	member		
14.30-14.45	**Review panel's private discussion**				
14.45-15.30	Hungarian Advisory Committee	István Greiner	former member, Gedeon Richter Plc. (pharmaceuticals), research director	15:30-ig	ESG 2015, external stakeholder's involvement and student participation
		Dale A. Martin	CEO, Siemens Hungary		
15.40-16.35	Board of Appeals	László Csiba	chair		Responsibilities and position vis-à-vis the Educational Authority and Ministry of Human Capacities
		Zoltán Rácz	member		
		Péter Lakatos	programme officer, Board of Appeals		
16.45-17.30	Financial Director of HAC	László Gémesi	financial director of HAC		Procedures, financial regulations, annual meeting and recommended actions
17.30-18.00	**Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day**				
	03.05.2018 **HAC OFFICES AND MINISTRY: INSTITUTIONS, STAKEHOLDERS**				
Timing	**topic**	**Persons for interview**			**Issues to be discussed**
8.15-8.45	**Review panel private meeting and HAC's database demonstration**				
8.45-9.30	Meeting with Visiting team members	Andrea Mikáczó	member of VT		Evaluation process, responsibilities of members, training, participation of students and additional expertise.
		József Berács	chair of VT to WSÜF		

		Péter Vámosi	student member of VT to KEE and Szent István University		
		Tamás Kőmíves	chair of VT to the University of Kaposvár		
9.40-10.25	Meeting with external experts	Bálint Bachmann	external expert		HAC's pool of experts, training, ex-ante evaluation, site visits, new institutional accreditation guidelines and presence of students.
		Zoltán Balog	external expert		
		Ferenc Husvéth	external expert		
		Judit Droppa	external expert		
		Mihály Duffek	external expert		
		József Temesi	external expert		
10.25-10.40	**Review panel´s private discussion**				
10.40-11.25	Meeting with heads of reviewed HEIs, HEI representatives	Éva Patayné Malomsoki	international director, Sándor Wekerle Business College		Involvement in the review criteria and processes of committees, HAC's dissemination of information about its work, training for the fourth cycle of institutional accreditation started in 2017, contribution of HAC to IQA of institutions.
		Zsolt Enyedi	vice rector of KEE		
		Elek Bartha	vice rector of the University of Debrecen		

11.35-12.20	Meeting with further stakeholders (Labour Market representatives, representatives of civil society, Chamber of Commerce and Industry)	Tamás Dezső	chair, Higher Education Planning Body	Involvement in the review criteria and processes of committees, training and HAC's dissemination of information about its work.
		István Greiner	research director, Gedeon Richter Plc. (pharmaceuticals)	
		Katalin Felvinczi	member, vice dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology, representative of Hungarian Association of Psychologists	
12.20-13.05			**Lunch (panel only)**	
13.05-14.05	Meeting with students involved in HAC procedures, participated in recent HAC evaluations (National Union of Students, Association of PhD and DLA Candidates)	Ádám Garbai	student member of VT to Debrecen University	Participation in HAC activities and decisions (HAC Board, Expert Committees).
		Gergő Németh	student member of VT to the Szent István University	
		Péter Vámosi	student member of VT to KEE and Szent István University	
14.15-15.00	Meeting with Hungarian Rectors' Conference and Hungarian Doctoral Council	László Csernoch	chair, HDC	Database, "systemic risk" pointed at by previous review panel. There is a systemic risk that leading boards of institutions and programmes coordinators may be less concerned with follow-up recommendations and with the
		PéterFöldesi	rector, Széchenyi István University, vice-president of HRC	
		Gábor Szabó	vice-chair of HRC	

Timing	Topic	Persons for interview			Issues to be discussed
		Frigyes Kőnig	vice-chair, HDC		implementation of quality improvement plans. This is a result of the sector knowing the decisions of HAC might be overturned by the Educational Authority. This creates a situation of expectation which could lead to a cumulative loss of confidence in the HAC QA processes on the side of experts and HEIs. It should be brought rapidly more clarity in the effective distribution of competences and the independence of HAC processes.
		József Timár	vice-rector, Semmelweis University, vice-chair of HDC		
15.00-15.15	**Review's panel private discussion**				
15.15-16.15	Meeting with International Advisory Board	Achim Hopbach	member of IAB	skype	Composition, recommendations issued and gender balance.
		Liudvika Leisyte	member of IAB	skype	
16.15-16.45	**Taxi to Ministry**				
16.45-17.45	Meeting with Secretary of State for Education and Deputy Secretary of State for Higher Education	László Palkovics	Secretary of State for Education		Independence of agency, development of data collection and management systems for evidence-based policies, HAC development plans
		Zita Horváth	Deputy State Secretary for Higher Education (Ministry of Human Capacities)		
04.05.2018					
HAC OFFICES: FINDINGS AND WRAP-UP					
Timing	**Topic**	**Persons for interview**			**Issues to be discussed**
9.00-9.45	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify				
9.45-10.45	Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues	Valéria Csépe			

10.45-12.00	Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings				
12.00-13.00	Lunch (panel only)				
13.00-14.00	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Council/Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings				

Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE
August 2017

1. Background and Context

HAC was established by an act of parliament in the higher education act in 1993. According to the most recent act of 2011 the HAC is a national-level, independent body of experts tasked with the external evaluation of the quality of educational activities and the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions in Hungary. It elaborates its own rules of procedure and criteria for evaluation. It operates within the scope of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), and has been reviewed for compliance with the ESG by ENQA in 2008 and 2013. HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2002. Following its "full member under review" status after the 2013 evaluation, its full membership was reconfirmed in 2015.

The current president of HAC took office in September 2016. In December 2016, the HAC Board approved a new mission statement and strategy and an action plan in January 2017. The strategy, which followed the completion of the third institutional accreditation cycle, intends to steer the HAC into an increasingly service-oriented agency whose activities aim to support higher education institutions in enhancing their internal quality assurance systems.

The HAC receives its annual budget from the Ministry of Human Capacities on the basis of the budget from the previous year and the HAC's plans for the new budget period.

HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2000 and is applying for renewal of the ENQA membership.

HAC is applying for registration on EQAR.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent HAC fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of HAC should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support HAC application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

2.1 Activities of HAC within the scope of the ESG

In order for HAC to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities HAC that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of HAC have to be addressed in the external review:

- − initial accreditation of new higher education institutions;
- − initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of bachelor programmes;
- − initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of master programmes;

- initial accreditation of bachelor programmes;
- initial accreditation of master programmes;
- initial accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities;
- initial evaluation of education and outcome framework requirements of VET programmes;
- initial accreditation of VET programmes;
- accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles;
- evaluation of bachelor and master programmes in disciplinary clusters;
- accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles.
-

HAC also evaluates applications for professor titles/positions by universities but this activity is not within the scope of the ESG, thus it will not be addressed in the external review.

In addition, the self-assessment report and external review report should also address HAC's internal regulations for the recognition of other agencies' external QA activities or decisions, especially in case the agency is not registered on EQAR.

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by HAC including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to HAC ;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations

are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide HAC with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards HAC review.

3.2 Self-assessment by HAC, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

HAC is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which HAC fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

HAC will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to HAC at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by HAC in arriving in Budapest, Hungary.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the granting or reconfirmation of ENQA membership.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to HAC within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If HAC chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by HAC, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

HAC is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which HAC expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

HAC will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. HAC commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by HAC. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether HAC has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to HAC and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by HAC, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. HAC may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

6. Budget

HAC shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, HAC will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to HAC if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	By September 2017
Appointment of review panel members	December 2017
Self-assessment completed	January 2018
Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator	February 2018
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	March 2018
Briefing of review panel members	April 2018
Review panel site visit	Late April/Early May 2018
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	June 2018
Draft of evaluation report to HAC	July 2018
Statement of HAC to review panel if necessary	July 2018
Submission of final report to ENQA	By Mid-August 2018
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of HAC	September 2018
Publication of the report	September 2018

ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, 2015
HAC	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
IAB	International Advisory Board
IQA	internal quality assurance
EMMI	Ministry of Human Capacities
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act
QA	quality assurance
SAR	Self-assessment report
VET	Vocational education and training

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY THE HAC
- Self-assessment report
- Hyperlinks and annexes to the self-assessment report

NATIONAL DOCUMENTS
- Higher Education Act of 2011
- Government Decree 19/2012

HAC REGULATIONS AND INTERNAL DOCUMENTS

General
- Action Plan 2017-2018
- Budget overview 2013-2017
- By-Laws
- Code of Ethics
- Databases
- External reviews of HAC
- Regulation on Fulfilling Obligation to Publish Public Information

Methodologies and Criteria
- Accreditation criteria for foreign higher education institutions applying for operation in Hungary
- Education and learning outcome framework requirements
- IQA documents folder (including Staff Handbook) (hardcopy)
- Methodology for health sciences evaluation
- Regulations for accrediting joint programmes
- Regulation on Recognition of Accreditation Issued by Another Entity for HEI or Programme
- Self-assessment Guidebook

Presentations
- Conference presentation on experiences regarding the disciplinary programme accreditation of business and economics programmes

Procedures
- Procedures for the Board of Appeals
- Procedures for the Board of Financial Supervisors
- Procedures for appointing full professors

Recommendations
- Recommendations from the IAB 2017

Reports
- Annual Report 2016
- Report of the Board of Financial Supervisors 2016
- Report of the discipline of economics and business
- Reports on the Quality of Hungarian Higher Education (in Hungarian). Vol. 1 on the evaluation of business and economics, 2016
- Self-assessment report of the doctoral school of Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music

- Examples in Hungarian of institutional accreditation reports

Resolutions
- For evaluated Bachelor programmes

Surveys
- Survey feedback from Institutions

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL
National documents
- Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development. "Public Education in Hungary: Facts and Figures. "2014/2015
- Ministry of Human Capacities. "A Change of Pace in Higher Education." 2015.

Documents provided by ENQA
- 2013 External Review Report
- 2015 Partial Review Report

SCREENSHOTS FROM ANNEX 1 OF SAR

Institutional accreditation of new HEIs and Re-accreditation in 5-year cycles

ESG	New HEIs	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus	Re- accreditation	HAC criteria
1.1	The HEI has to show that it operates a QA body that ensures the quality of its university- or college-level teaching and learning activities; sufficient scientifically qualified academic staff in relation to the education provided; infrastructure; and regulations supporting its operations and activities	I.3, II.1	Structure of the HEI and its planned QA system		II.1
1.2		I.2	Educational programmes		II.2
1.3		I.2	Educational programmes		II.3
1.4		I.4	Regulations set down in the HE Act (Annex 2 of the Act)		II.4
1.5		II.2	Availability of sufficient, employed academic and research staff to carry out HEI's tasks and ensuring the quality of its continuing operation	All ESG Part 1 standards, with up to 25 questions that approach the elements of the standards from various angles	II.5
1.6		II.3	Special focus on infrastructure to support teaching and learning		II.6
1.7		I.1	Applicants must show organised and documented professional, teaching and research activity for at least 3 years in the disciplinary fields for which they apply (new institutions		II.7

ESG	New HEIs	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus	Re- accreditation	HAC criteria
			must also apply for at least four programmes, church-maintained HEIs only one programme)		
1.8		I.4	Documents, including student regulations (on admission; student rights and responsibilities; decisions and appeal rules concerning student status; study and assessment regulations that govern acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and their assessment); doctoral training; regulations setting down student fees and payment obligations; distribution of student allowances; student disciplinary and compensation obligations; accident prevention and management		II.8
1.9	Not relevant				II.9
1.10	Not relevant				II.10

Education and learning outcome framework requirements

ESG	VET	BA	MA	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus
1.1	Not relevant				
1.2	Application must demonstrate ECTS points for modules and elective subjects, credits that count toward further education, practical training, thesis requirements, and learning outcomes and qualification; and how education and learning outcome framework content aligns with NQF knowledge, competences, attitude, autonomy and responsibility for levels 5, 6 or 7			II and I	Conditions for achieving learning outcomes, knowledge, competences, attitude, autonomy and responsibility for the planned qualification and the relevant NQF level; appropriate ECTS points for modules; alignment between defined competences and the NQF
1.3	Not relevant for this procedure				
1.4	Not relevant for this procedure				
1.5	Not relevant for this procedure				
1.6	Not relevant for this procedure				
1.7	Institution submits labour-market assessment for such a programme only as information but the HAC does not evaluate it				
1.8	All HAC resolutions are public (ESG 2.6)				
1.9	Not relevant for this procedure				
1.10	Not relevant for this procedure				

Initial accreditation of new programmes

ESG	VET	BA	MA	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus
1.1	QA of launching or changing programmes is evaluated in institutional accreditation, must include Senate approval			Information form in application annex	In relation to programme, Senate resolution on launching programme is checked
1.2	Based on education and learning outcome framework requirements			I.1, I.2	Prevalence in the curriculum of disciplines and educational areas and relevant subjects that make up the programme; ECTS as set down in framework; learning outcomes in relation framework and NQF
1.3	Teaching and learning process must be in relation to educational level; application must demonstrate learning support instruments, pedagogical methods, and student assessment procedures for the programme			I.3	Teaching methods, instruments and procedures for teaching and learning; curriculum content and support instruments, incl. tutors/mentors; consideration of different and flexible paths and modes of delivery for different types of students and relevant to programme; conditions for practical training; suitability of modes of assessment in relation to stated learning outcomes; mobility window; link to student catalogue showing programmes and assessments as well as learning support

ESG	VET	BA	MA	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus
1.4	Application must state subjects and their ECTS points that count toward entry into BA programmes		Application must state additional ECTS credits required for entry to MA from graduates from specified BA programmes in line with the MA framework requirement	I.1, I.2, I.3	Model curriculum, which is made available to students and must remain valid for students of a given year until graduation; all relevant regulations
1.5	Majority of teaching staff must be employed by HEI and set ratio of staff as a whole must have relevant scientific and professional qualifications; set maximised teaching load; research field must be in line with programme			II.1, II.2, II3	Complex academic staff requirements, including ratios for employment status and required qualifications within whole teaching staff, and specifically head of programme; workload to check capacity for caring for students; research in relation to programme
	Where relevant, there must be practical training in line with the programme			III	Conditions for practical training, where relevant, including suitable infrastructure
1.6	Applications must show infrastructure (facilities, library, IT); scientific background of programme; mentoring for talented students			III	Links to available learning resources and student support. (Evaluated in depth during institutional accreditation)
1.7	Application must show Senate resolution supporting programme, for which the condition is appropriate information management				(Relevant regulations evaluated during institutional accreditation)

ESG	VET	BA	MA	HAC criteria	Evaluation focus
1.8	Application must show provision of information to students				Provided link to HEI website
1.9	Evaluated during institutional accreditation				
1.10	Relevant for institutional accreditation. For programmes, there are follow-up procedures if conditions for accreditation were set				

Doctoral schools

ESG	Initial accreditation	HAC criteria	Re-accreditation	HAC criteria
1.1	QA plan must contain quality goals and goals for programme development as well as relevant instruments	II.3	Self-evaluation report that includes the QA plan and instruments	II.3
1.2	Educational plan must contain requirements for obtaining degree, including subjects and ECTS	II.3	Educational plan is reviewed if it is changed	II.3
1.3	Students hold student status with HEI, all student-relevant regulations pertain		Evaluated during institutional accreditation	
1.4	Doctoral school regulation must comprise entrance and progression rules and procedures	II.3	If head of doctoral school changes, all regulations are reviewed	II.3
1.5	Complex rules for head and core academic staff of doctoral school that extend to scientific qualifications; coherent scientific research must be ongoing	I.1, II.2	If head of doctoral school changes, all regulations are reviewed	I.1, II.2, III.1

		criteria			
1.6	Students hold student status with HEI, all student-relevant regulations pertain	III.2.5	Evaluated during institutional accreditation	
1.7	Standard applies indirectly: Senate must approve new doctoral school		Self-evaluation containing figures and analysis of student application procedure, including selection of applicants; inconsistencies in figures lead to closer evaluation of doctoral school	
1.8	All information regarding curriculum, by-laws, QA plan, academic staff, and regulations must appear on HEI website and in www.doktori.hu	II.3, III.2.5	Continually updated information on HEI website; changes entered into www.doktori.hu	III.2.5
1.9	Not relevant for new doctoral schools		Self-evaluation report, that includes changes in academic staff	
1.10	Not relevant for new doctoral schools		Every five years or sooner if HAC learns of relevant changes	III.2.3

Bachelor and Master programmes in disciplinary clusters

ESG	BA & MA	Additional evaluation focus for each individual programme
1.1	Same criteria as for new programmes	QA system relating to programmes; institution's actions since establishment of programme; input and output factors relating to quality (academic staff, students and infrastructure); SWOT analysis

ESG	BA & MA	Additional evaluation focus for each individual programme
1.2		Content of programme based on curriculum
1.3	Same criteria as for new programmes	How programme prepares student for transition to MA or PhD programme; scientific theory and research methodologies, use of texts, e-learning, etc.; mentoring talented students; workshops; student research; scholarships; with applied programmes also transmission of practical knowledge and skills
1.4		Assessment processes; special focus on final examination
1.5		Qualifications of academic staff and heads of programmes; age distribution
1.6		Student support in relation to programme
1.7		Evaluation of institutional analyses about applicants and enrolment
1.8		
1.9		Results of analyses on teaching instruments and their ongoing development as well as publications, projects, scientific achievements
1.10		