



**Summary of the joint meeting of the HAC International Advisory Board and  
HAC Hungarian Advisory Board  
30 October 2020  
and the Annual meeting of the International Advisory Board  
31 October 2020**

**Summary of the meetings**

The International Advisory Board (IAB) of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) held its annual meeting on Friday and Saturday, **30-31 October 2020**. This year, the meeting was held online between 10.00 and 12.00 hours via Microsoft TEAMS, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was chaired on both days by **Valéria Csépe**, HAC President. All IAB members were present: **Tove Bull, Guy Haug, Achim Hopbach, Liudvika Leišytė, Lučka Lorber, Bert Roebben, Norma Ryan, and Mieczyslaw Socha**.

The Friday meeting between 15.00 and 17.30 hours was a workshop on the theme “**Reflections on HAC’s new quality assurance procedure for doctoral schools**” with a range of invited stakeholders. In addition to the IAB, three of the members of the Hungarian Advisory Board were present: **Gábor Bojár, András Hány and Martin A. Dale**, with **Imre Komlósi** representing Erzsébet Knáb. Also attending were HAC Vice-President **László Hunyady**, and HAC Board members **István Greiner, László Kóczy and Enikő Sepsi** as well as HAC Secretary General **Ádám Kéglér**. **Piroska Szabó-Révész** represented the HAC expert committee on doctoral training evaluation. The National Union of Doctoral Students was represented by **László Nemes** and **Viktória Lilla Pató**, while **Péter Kovács** attended on the part of the National Union of Students in Hungary. On the part of the HAC staff participants were **Péter Levente Lakatos** HAC Deputy Director and **Beatrix Dányi, Lelle Gulyás, Mária Pécsi, Christina Rozsnyai** and **Andrea Szlivka**, programme officers, as well as **Krisztina Rátz**, communications officer.

Saturday was the business meeting of the IAB, with President **Valéria Csépe**, Secretary General **Ádám Kéglér**, Deputy Director **Péter Levente Lakatos**, **Krisztina Brocskó** and **Christina Rozsnyai**, programme officers, and **Krisztina Rátz**, communications officer, attending.

Board members received the meeting documents by e-mail prior to the meeting. They comprised the agenda, the Annual Report 2019–2020 and a HAC follow-up report on the IAB Recommendations 2019 as well as a copy of the HAC mid-term follow-up report to ENQA.

The meeting proceeded in accordance with the agenda, focusing on an overview of the HAC’s work in 2019/20 and the follow-up on IAB Recommendations 2019. The President again welcomed the participants and the agenda was accepted.

From 12.30–13.31 hours the Board, in its closed meeting, formulated its recommendations with the assistance of Christina Rozsnyai, meeting secretary.

**Recommendations of the HAC’s International Advisory Board**

The IAB has discussed the work of the HAC in the past year and commends the Agency for its achievements in this period, such as increasing the professionalization of its staff, the implementation and refinement of new procedures, and, in the last few months, raising its international visibility. With the introduction of new procedures accomplished and the implementation ongoing, and given the many tasks HAC has to carry out, the IAB would like to support the HAC in its progress by making the following recommendations.

1. The IAB believes it is essential for the HAC to better define its own priorities within the Hungarian academic system on the national and international level. Building on its Strategy 2019–2024, update the current Action Plan with specific priorities identified and means of measuring progress in implementation, including development of key performance indicators agreed with the HAC Board. Consider the general policy framework and the HAC’s role within the national higher education policy, but also provide an outlook on what the HAC wants to achieve in the next four–five years.
2. Given the actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HAC’s analysis of its work should encompass the actual results of these actions and, crucially, identifying
  - how the HAC can optimize its future work by building on the most successful measures, and



- how the HAC can contribute to the discussion about long-term changes in higher education, in consultation with its external stakeholder.
- 3. Another area for reconsideration is the HAC's organizational structure, in light of its tasks, identified priorities and resources; reflect on whether the number, remit and size of all the HAC committees is optimal. One aspect to be taken into account the fact that the ex post procedures focus on the internal quality assurance of institutions and doctoral schools, so that with these, different expertise is called for in the internal decision-making hierarchy than with the ex ante procedures, which are discipline related.
- 4. A recurring weakness of the HAC, identified by the IAB as well as the ENQA review panel, is the need for more efficient training of experts on all levels. The IAB recognizes that the HAC has made progress in the past year by providing some training packages, but it still has the impression that the purpose of a review in light of improving the quality of higher education and the expectation of experts for this purpose should be better transmitted.
- 5. The IAB recognizes the importance of student participation in the work of the HAC on all levels. The IAB welcomes the ongoing thematic analysis on the students' experience in quality assurance and recommends focusing also on identifying and disseminating the value of student involvement in various evaluation procedures on the one hand, and on how to involve them in a more effective way on the other hand. The IAB stresses the importance of publishing thematic analyses and sharing the experience and expertise with the wider community both in Hungary and abroad.
- 6. The IAB recommends that for the evaluation of doctoral schools the HAC should take a holistic approach. Beyond relying on particular indicators for the ESG standards, the HAC – and indeed the individual doctoral schools themselves – should define their different roles within their university and the country, taking into consideration the profile of the school and the university. The IAB supports the plan of the HAC to eventually move the evaluation of the doctoral schools into the institutional evaluation process in order to ensure the integration of doctoral education as core in the mission of the universities. The IAB supports the HAC's efforts to increase its use of international experts in the procedure and recommends accelerating its implementation.
- 7. As regards the evaluation of university professor applications, which is a task set by law where the HAC provides an expert opinion to the minister, the IAB recommends differentiating its criteria according to whether the professor's and the university's profile focuses on applied or academic research, and in this way adapt its evaluation to the profile and goals of the institution.
- 8. The IAB noted that the great majority of appeals procedures filed with its Board of Appeals concern university professor applications. With these – but also with appeals against other decisions – the IAB recommends that the HAC should analyze the nature of the appeals and use the conclusions in order to refine its procedures. A publication of such an analysis would help in a mutual dialogue with higher education institutions to reduce the current tensions.
- 9. The IAB recommends that HAC should prepare a customised internationalization strategy, which would be in line with its Strategy 2019–2024 and with the need to internationalize Hungarian higher education. It should define the HAC's mid- and long-term goals of, and the purpose for, various internationalization activities, beyond making good use of international experts. A key goal of internationalization must be rendering the quality of higher education in Hungary visible to the international community and in particular to potential students coming from abroad. The strategy should make it possible to review the procedures used by the HAC, set priorities and define steps to reach the goals.

Regarding the topic for the 2021 workshop, the IAB suggest **“The HAC's strategic internationalization concept and its operationalization within the Hungarian higher education system and the agency”**.

The next meeting of the IAB will be held on **29–30 October 2021**.

12 November 2020

Recorded by Christina Rozsnyai

Amended and approved by the HAC International Advisory Board members via electronic mail