Hungarian Accreditation Committee External Evaluation 2008

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

H▲C

March 2008

Contents

Abbreviations

ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines, or in full: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HAC	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
OKM	Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

1. Foreword

The clear and increasing importance of quality culture in the European Higher Education Area is similarly and independently evident in Hungarian Higher Education. The dramatic expansion of higher education following the political and social changes in Hungary in the last two decades, the institutional integration process in 2000, the introduction in 2006 of the two/three cycle (BA/MA/Ph.D.) program structure as part of the Bologna process, all demand a more effective and much more participatory quality culture. Hungary's first Higher Education Act in 1993 immediately established an accreditation scheme covering the whole system. It also established this country's higher education as part of the European academic community, which manifested itself in several activities and organizations and developed into a living tradition and active practice.

Initiating the present external evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee is both a positive reflection of HAC on the current trends in the European Higher Education Area and a well recognized internal necessity for assuring the quality of Hungarian higher education.

At the same time we believe that the outcomes of this evaluation will contribute positively to European quality culture and especially to the policies and practices promoted by ENQA.

Dr. György Bazsa
President
HAC

2. Context and Aims of the Evaluation: Terms of Reference and Self-Evaluation Process

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) adopted by the European Ministers of Education in Bergen in 2005 call for the external review of a European quality assurance agency's activities at least every five years. In addition, the regulations for membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) call for an external review every five years, according to the ESG criteria. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) initiated its external evaluation for the purpose of renewing its full membership in ENQA and in compliance with the ESG. In addition, the HAC would like to learn how experts judge the HAC's activities in the Hungarian context. This involves the legal environment in which HAC works and the degree it is able to comply with the legislation as well as the HAC's internal regulations, standards and procedures. Moreover, an external evaluation of the HAC, conducted in 2000, produced a set of recommendations. The current review should comment on the HAC's achievements and failures with regard to those recommendations that are still pertinent.

The framework for external evaluation of the HAC was accepted by the HAC plenary on 5 October 2007, and subsequently agreed with the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, who are commissioning the review.

The external review is a type B evaluation of the HAC as defined in the ENQA Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies p. 7. This means that the purpose of the review is twofold:
- To check compliance with the ESG and thereby the ENQA membership criteria, and
- A wider purpose, namely to determine
    - the effectiveness of the HAC's activities within the context of Hungarian higher education quality, and
    - to comment on the HAC's progress on the recommendations set down in the report on the External Evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, conducted by a panel coordinated by CRE (now EUA) in 1999/2000.

The evaluation criteria against which the review panel shall assess the HAC are
- for Purpose and Scope, 1.: the ESG Part 3, European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies, as well as Part 2, European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education,
- for Purpose and Scope, 2.a: legislation governing the HAC and the HAC's internal regulations and criteria
- for Purpose and Scope, 2.b: publication titled External Evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. (Budapest: HAC, 2000).

For the self-evaluation process the HAC set up a working group, made up of the HAC president, the vice-president representing external stakeholders, the chair of the quality development committee, the secretary-general, and the program officer for foreign affairs. Its task was to work out the concept and Terms of Reference for the self-evaluation, to compile the data, conduct and analyze surveys, including SWOT analyses, among HAC members and staff for the self-evaluation process and write the SER. The HAC membership approved the concept. The SER was approved by the HAC membership at its plenary meeting on 29 February 2008.

3. Outline of the national higher education system[1]

In November 2005 Parliament passed the Higher Education Act (Higher Education Act of 2005) which came into effect on March 1, 2006 with the following key objectives:

- to provide practicable and up-to-date skills and knowledge by launching the multi-cycle course structure with the effect of September 1, 2006 in the entire system,
- to create an environment for the operation of the institutional system to assist co-operation and participation in the integration of Hungarian higher education into the European Higher Education Area, as well as to create the conditions for student-teacher mobility,
- to implement a governance, management and financial system for the institutions adapted to the changed domestic and international environment,
- to promote the involvement of private funds, foster the right of higher education institutions to self-government, property, independent financial management and business activities, to create the conditions for the above,
- to request financial contribution from students starting their studies in September 2007.

In its "Új Magyarország" Program ("New Hungary") for the period of 2006-2010, as part of the plans to create a competitive and high standard higher education, the Government declared the implementation of the required reforms launched by the "Magyar Universitas Program" ("Hungarian Universitas Program").[2]

The Higher Education Act defined the new course structure. With the effect of September 1, 2006 the former structure, having separated the university and college levels[3], was replaced in an integrated form by the successive cycles of (3- to 4-year) Bachelor and (1- to 2-year) Master, where passing the various stages ensure the qualifications required for employment.

Higher-level vocational training granting a qualification after the secondary school leaving certificate, the unified, undivided courses (5-6 years) still provided under 17 programs (e.g. in

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[1] Section 4 is updated from the Hungarian "Country Report on the Implementation of the Bologna Process 2005-2007" http://www.okm.gov.hu/letolt/felsoo/bolo_national_report_hungary_2006_070601.pdf
[2] In English at http://www.okm.gov.hu/letolt/english/towards_bologna.pdf
[3] It is unclear at this point in how far the practical orientation of colleges and academic orientation of universities will be retained with both teaching Bachelor and Master programs that are based on the same education and outcome requirements.

human medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, architecture and in some fields of arts), and the postgraduate specialist training course that may be taken after obtaining a first degree constitute integral parts of the new structure. The education of new generation of researchers closely linked to the Higher Education and Research Areas is the responsibility of the third cycle with doctoral schools in higher education institutions that the HAC has accredited to provide such programs.

The credit system aligned to the European Credit Transfer System and designed to evaluate the workload and performance of the students has been in place in all higher education institutions since 2003; the workload of a student progressing at average rate is 30 credits for each semester.

Executive powers have been separated in respect of the operation of higher education institutions. The powers of the minister of education and culture extend only to issuing and enforcing legal regulations. The maintainer of the higher education institution and the institution itself adopt their decisions in compliance with the Government and ministerial decrees and the internal regulations.

As a part of the new sectoral governance pattern, new organizational tasks have been introduced, such as defining the sectoral quality assurance policy, the operation of the higher education information system, a career tracking system for graduates, the operation of the Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre, the office of the ombudsman for education rights and exercising statutory supervisory powers.

In line with the new legal condition for students, new regulations were implemented regarding admission to higher education: as regards first degree programs and unified, undivided training (and from 2008 even in higher-level vocational training) admission is based on the study results of the uniform secondary school-leaving exam, on student choice, and a ranking of results, while in respect of Master courses, postgraduate specialist training courses and doctoral studies, conditions for admission are set by the institutions.

Students may participate in state-funded education for 12 terms, subject to their adequate performance (doctoral studies are not included in the calculation). From September 1, 2006, in order to promote the mobility of students, student loans are also available for studies abroad.

The Higher Education Act and the implementing regulations thereof ensure the enforcement of equal treatment, the proportionate participation of women, the support of the disadvantaged and consideration of the capabilities of the disabled. The protection and enhancement of the quality of education is ensured by the adequate institutional and legislative background for the provision of differentiated training, activities in special colleges for the gifted and other forms of support for highly gifted students.

The consent of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee is required for the enactment of the government decree pertaining to the rules of doctoral studies, and as stipulated in the Higher Education Act, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee provides an opinion in the course of the procedure for the establishment, transformation of higher education institutions, launching a first cycle or Master training, or the establishment of a faculty or a doctoral school.

Hungarian higher education comprises a total of 70 independent institutions (2008), as follows:
- State higher education institutions: 30
  o Of this: university: 18
  o college: 12
- Non state higher education institutions: 40
  o Of this: university: 7
  o college: 30

The total number of those participating in higher education is 430,431 (academic year of 2006/2007), as follows:
- new entrants in the academic year of 2006/2007: 91,962
- final year: 112,044
- foreign students: 15,110
- women: 241,379
- Breakdown of students by status:
  o full-time: 249,139
  o part time: 155,307
  o distance learning: 25,985
- Breakdown of students by training levels:
  o higher-level vocational training: 24,949
  o college-level training (to be terminated): 163,142
  o first cycle course: 91,369
  o university-level training (to be terminated):   113,429
  o Master training: 110
  o unified, undivided: 7,745
  o Ph.D./DLA training: 7,784
  o postgraduate specialist training course: 21,903.

4. The HAC and higher education accreditation in Hungary

The HAC was established in the country's first higher education law in 1993. It was one of the earliest bodies of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe, a product of intense negotiations between policy-makers, higher education institutions and academics that had begun after the fall of the socialist government in 1989/90. Another significant player that shaped the current academia is the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, restructured after World War II along the lines of the Soviet model, with its own hierarchy of academic titles that continue to act as a scientific benchmark until the present.

The Higher Education Act was amended a number of times, often changing one or the other of the HAC's tasks. Its fundamental mission, however, has remained the same, namely to ensure the quality of Hungarian higher education via external evaluation and accreditation and, from the beginning, with an improvement orientation.

The HAC is the only official body in Hungary responsible for higher education accreditation. According to the Higher Education Act Section 109 (1),

> "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education is an independent national body of experts assessing quality in education, research, and artistic activities in higher education, and examining the operation of the institutional quality development scheme."

The first full cycle of institutional accreditation was completed in 2000. Prior to launching its second cycle in 2004, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee had begun a pilot project where it evaluated all study programs in the country in two disciplines, history and psychology, within a short timeframe and with the same visiting teams. The parallel, disciplinary accreditation has been very positive, both in its reception and results, and has continued since then. Until the end of 2007, programs in law, medicine, pharmaceutics and dentistry were evaluated. Concurrently, the HAC has introduced a new institutional accreditation procedure, which focuses on institutional governance, management and the internal quality assurance mechanisms of a college or university, without looking also at each program in the given procedure, as was the practice earlier.

In order to receive state recognition and to issue degrees, private higher education institutions must undergo accreditation. Church-maintained, denominational higher education institutions receive state financing similar to state institutions and are accredited but the agency's mandate pertains only to secular programs. Another task of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee is to review applications by foreign higher education institutions to function in Hungary, either alone or in conjunction with a Hungarian institution.

5. External Quality Assurance Undertaken by the HAC

5.1. Scope

The main activities of the HAC are to evaluate and accredit new degree programs and new higher education institutions and existing ones in eight-year cycles, but there are also a number of intermittent tasks. The range of duties is described in the Higher Education Act as follows,

"Section 109 (1) The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall

a) contribute to the formulation of principles for sectoral quality policy and the monitoring of its implementation,

b) **deleted with amendment effective September 1, 2007** *(see below)*

c) carry out accreditation in connection with the establishment and operation of institutions,

d) propose requirements for attaining the position of university professor,

e) monitor the convergence of the sectoral quality development system with the higher education systems of the European Economic Area,

f) express, upon request of the higher education institution, an opinion on education, research and artistic activities,

g) deliver expert opinions on the introduction of undergraduate and graduate courses, the establishment of doctoral schools, the introduction of doctorate courses and on doctoral regulations,

h) express, upon request of the higher education institution, an opinion in respect of awarding the title of university professor,

i) prepare and publish the National List of Higher Education Experts.

(2) The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall express an opinion on the Higher Education Bill and its draft implementing decrees, as well as on the draft ministerial decrees regulating higher education.[4]

(3) The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall cooperate in

a) the evaluation of the education, research, and artistic activities of higher education,

b) the preparation of plans aiming at higher education development."

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[4] http://www.okm.gov.hu/letolt/nemzet/naric/act_cxxxix_2005.pdf

The deleted point b) in the excerpt from the act above required the HAC to "*provide professional support for the drafting and operation of the quality development schemes of higher education institutions*". The change reflects the demand on the part of service organizations to enter the higher education quality assurance market. They are entering the market with increasing intensity. This was not barred in the past, however, with the change in the law it is clear that the law-makers support this trend. The HAC is not supposed to offer consultancy for institutions to develop their internal quality assurance systems. The aim is to clearly separate organizationally the two processes of preparing for evaluation and the evaluation as such.

Of course the HAC, in its cyclical reviews, formulates recommendations on such systems in retrospect. To a degree, the HAC is increasingly in a competitive position with such organizations, which poses a motivating challenge.

It follows from the Higher Education Act and the description of the HAC's activities outlined above that the HAC's main activities are
- ex ante accreditation of new higher education institutions
- ex ante accreditation of new faculties
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of Bachelor programs
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of Master programs
- ex ante accreditation of Bachelor programs to be launched at an institution
- ex ante accreditation of Master programs to be launched at an ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities
- ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions by institutions
- ex post accreditation of institutions in eight-year cycles
- ex post accreditation of degree programs and doctoral schools in eight-year cycles

The table below indicates the number of itemized ex ante and ex post decisions for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007.

HAC DECISIONS BY TYPE AND YEAR IN THE PERIOD 2005-2007

Application type	2005	2006	2007	Total
New institution	1	3	7	11
New faculty	4	7	0	11
Foreign institution requesting license in HU	4	4	4	12
BA qualification/outcome requirements	42	35	4	81
MA qualification/outcome requirements	28	125	208	361
New BA programs	603	142	97	842

New MA programs		74	252	326
New doctoral schools	3	7	2	12
Univ. professorships	237	152	171	560
2nd cycle institutional accreditation*	7	42	33	82
Disciplinary (parallel) accreditation**		111		111
Total	**931**	**700**	**781**	**2412**

* 2005: 2 institutions - 5 faculties
  2006: 15 institutions - 27 faculties
  2007: 12 institutions - 21 faculties
** 2006: institutions + BA programs + specialized post-graduate programs + doctoral schools
veterinary medicine: 8
general medicine: 33
dentistry: 1
pharmaceutics: 4
law: 44

In the following sections, ex ante and ex post evaluation and accreditation are discussed in detail.

5.1.1. Ex ante evaluation and accreditation of institutions, faculties and programs

A major part of HAC's work are ex ante evaluations and accreditations of applications to establish and grant state recognition to higher education institutions and faculties, of national education and outcome requirements as framework requirements for all degree programs taught in Hungary, and of new study programs to be launched at a college or university. Since 2006, in all except 17 degree programs[5], Bachelor and Master programs replace the traditional, single stream college or university programs, and all require accreditation. Ex ante accreditation is initiated by the applicant institution that wishes to launch a new degree program. This is done in two steps: if the program is not yet taught in the country, national education and outcome requirements have to be worked out, passed by the HAC, and published by the minister as decrees. If these already exist, an institution will apply for launching the program and the HAC checks whether the designed program conforms to the framework set down in the education and outcome requirements. In addition, it checks if the program conforms to the accreditation requirements, and whether conditions at the applicant institution are suitable for teaching the program.

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[5] The single-stream programs are in medicine, pharmaceutics, veterinary medicine, dentistry, law and some degree programs in the arts.

Another task of the HAC is to review applications by foreign higher education institutions to function in Hungary, either alone or in conjunction with a Hungarian institution. The HAC's By-Laws contain accreditation requirements and guidelines for dealing with such applications. The procedural regulations are on the website also in English.[6]

Applications for ex-ante evaluation are evaluated according to the steps as follows:

> Filing → formal check by secretariat → chair(s) of respective HAC committee(s) appoint(s) reviewers → reviewers formulate written opinion → respective committee(s) discuss(es) the case and make(s) proposal for decision → (presidium discusses if necessary) → respective college(s) discuss(es) the case, accept or revise committee proposal(s) and make(s) proposal for decision → HAC plenary discusses and makes the decision → secretariat prepares letter to higher education institution (or Education Authority) → president checks and signs letter.

An important internal quality assurance role of the secretariat in the process is to closely follow the application along the way, to assure that deadlines, rules and regulations are observed, and if necessary to inform the respective chair or the president of the HAC in case of any perceived "irregularity" (such as e.g. a not sufficiently detailed or substantiated expert opinion, or observance of precedents in similar cases).

Quality evaluation of study programs is first of all checked against the legal requirements for a program, namely the

> a) Act on Higher Education;
> b) a government decree (and its amendments) defining the higher education program structure and the procedure for launching a new program at an institution; and finally
> c) a ministerial decree specifying the qualification requirements of each distinct degree program, specifically their designation, credit ranges the competences, skills, curriculum, credits and assessment obligations.

Beyond these, the HAC has its own set of criteria for evaluation and accreditation.

The HAC is not a legal authority. Its decisions and resolutions are, in legal terms, expert opinions. Ex ante accreditation decisions are technically approvals or non-approvals, since the HAC either "supports" or "does not support" a new entity. In cases where such entity does not agree with the HAC's decision, it may initiate a public-administrative procedure with the Educational Authority, set up by the education act, and which registers higher education institutions and degrees programs. The Educational Authority is bound by the HAC's second opinion if, following the review by its Board of Appeals, it is the same as the earlier decision. A second appeal may be launched with the minister, who has the power of decision.

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[6] http://www.mab.hu/english/doc/Kulfeljrend.doc

The HAC's decisions concerning education and outcome requirements for new programs also carry weight since the minister may not grant a higher education institution permission for them without having secured the HAC's support.

With doctoral schools, the HAC's decisions can only be appealed against directly to the minister who, in second instance following the review by the HAC's Board of Appeals, is bound by the HAC's decision.

Prior to the 2005 act, when appeal was possible only on procedural grounds and there was no Educational Authority, the minister had the right to override the HAC's initial decision on new programs, and has done so for various reasons unrelated to quality. In such cases, quality control could be exerted only with the cyclical accreditation review of the entity.

5.1.2. Doctoral schools

The HAC accredits doctoral schools both in ex ante and ex post procedures. The accreditation benchmarks consist of a government decree on doctoral schools[7] and the HAC's "Requirements for establishing and operating doctoral schools". As a consequence of the government decree, the HAC presently reviews all existing doctoral schools to check in which aspects they fulfill the conditions set down in the two documents. All data provided by the doctoral schools as well as the entire evaluation process elaboration and documentation are run via an Internet-accessed database[8], which is the first of its kind in Hungarian higher education. The data provided by the institutions are public, but the expert evaluations invited by the HAC are not publicly accessible. The HAC's final decisions are public.

5.1.3. University professorial positions

The HAC considers the vetting of prospective university professors an important part of its mission to ensure the quality of higher education in Hungary. This task was assigned to the HAC with an amendment to the Higher Education Act in 2000 and prior to the new 2005 act it pertained also to college professors. The measure was in part designed to curb the proliferation of positions of full professors, which in turn has financial implications. The benchmarks for university professorship accreditation are set down in "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee's requirements concerning university professorship application procedures for evaluation."

5.1.4. Ex post institutional and program accreditation

The external benchmarks for institutional accreditation are set in the Higher Education Act, which in Section 110 (1) calls for the HAC to

> "*ascertain whether the conditions for the pursuance of education, research, and artistic activities are fulfilled, and examine in which area of study, discipline of science and at what level of training the higher education institution satisfies such*

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[7] 33/2007. (III. 7.) Korm. rendelet Doktori iskola létesítésének eljárási rendjéről és a doktori fokozat megszerzésének feltételeiről (Gov. Decr. on the procedure for establishing a doctoral school and the conditions for attaining a doctoral degree), in Hungarian at http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A0700033.KOR
[8] The database was set up by the National Doctoral Council and is used jointly with the HAC.

conditions. Moreover it shall also examine whether the higher education institution operates the institutional quality development scheme in an appropriate manner, and whether the quality development objectives defined in the action plan have been implemented."

As noted, the first round of institutional evaluations was completed in 2000 and the HAC began planning the second cycle in 2002/03. The earlier guidebook was completely revised and with the adoption of the ESG, it was revised again. Institutional accreditation procedures according to the latest version have begun in 2007. A detailed description of the process is provided in section 6.1 of this report.

In the first cycle of institutional evaluation, all degree programs were also accredited. The procedure did not necessarily involve inspection of all programs on site, but the institutions' self-evaluation reports had to deal with all their programs. Since the success of the pilot project in 2004 to evaluate entire disciplines with a single pool of experts in a short timeframe, the HAC has begun to separate its institutional and program evaluation procedures, and beginning in 2007, programs no longer comprise the object of evaluation in institutional accreditations. A detailed description of disciplinary program accreditation is provided in section 6.1 of this report.

5.2. Legal framework

5.2.1. Mission and values

Initially, the HAC did not formulate a mission statement, since it based its evaluations on the existing legal instructions. In the Strategic Plan of 2001, a brief mission statement was included. With the adoption of a quality policy statement at its plenary meeting in December 2007, the HAC elaborated its quality policy, including its mission, extensively. The mission statement is given below, the full text of the quality policy is provided in the appendix.

"*Based on its mandate set down in the Higher Education Act, the HAC's mission is to contribute to advancing the quality of the social commitments of the Republic of Hungary as a member of the European Union and of the institutions of higher education and intellectual training that promote the welfare of its citizens, and to enhance the quality of their organizations, operation, expert groups and workshops. The general aim of the HAC is to safeguard the quality of Hungarian higher education, to ensure its functioning in compliance with the requirements proclaimed in laws and legislative provisions, and to support the quality development of higher education.*

Higher education institutions are tasked with setting up quality development programs within the scope of exercising their autonomy, in order to maintain and improve quality in higher education on the level of individual degree programs and institutional operation. The HAC supports their task by regularly evaluating them and formulating recommendations for them in the course of their

accreditation procedure. At the same time the HAC, in accordance with the law, also provides assistance to the government in steering higher education by contributing its expert conclusions for individual public-administrative decisions concerning quality and general educational policy concepts, and on new and amended draft legislation.

The HAC functions independently in its organization, operation and decision-making.

In the course of its operation, the HAC particularly respects the autonomy of its partners.

At the same time the HAC attaches importance to upholding and cultivating its contacts with the higher education institutions, their delegating organizations (Rectors' Conference, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the National Public Education Council, the National Minorities' Committee, stakeholders) as well as the Ministry of Culture and Education and student organizations.

Sectoral government and the formulation of higher education policies and, in conjunction with these, quality policies, along with the related legal regulations are the tasks of the educational administration. In these it is assisted by the HAC's expert activity as well as other state organizations (the Higher Education and Research Council, the Educational Authority, the Institute for Educational Research and Development, among others) and – under a set operational framework – non-profit and for-profit establishments. The HAC aims to cooperate with these bodies for the purpose of achieving its shared objectives."

5.2.2. Regulations and policies

The legal background governing the HAC consists of external legislation and internal rules and procedures:

- Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education
- Government Decree 69/2006 (III.28) on the Hungarian Accreditation Committee
- Government Decree 289/2005 (XII.22.) on Bachelor and Master programs and procedures for launching new programs
- Government Decree 79/2006 (IV.5.), Appendix 5 on Material and personnel provisions for launching new Bachelor and Master training and establishing faculties
- Continually updated list of Education and Outcome Requirements for Bachelor and Master programs (except teacher training programs) on ministry website at http://www.okm.gov.hu/doc/upload/200801/kepzesi_es_kimeneti_kovetelmeny ek_080124.pdf (in Hungarian)

- Continually updated list of Education and Outcome Requirements for teacher training Master programs on ministry website (in Hungarian) at
- http://www.okm.gov.hu/doc/upload/200712/tanar_szak_kkk_071211.pdf
- Government Decree 33/2007. (III. 7.) on the procedures for the establishment of doctoral schools and the conditions for attaining a doctor's degree
- The HAC's By-Laws (according to the higher education Act Section 111 (6) "*The Hungarian -Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall draw up its bylaws subject to the Minister of Education's approval*". The Minister's authority extends to legal oversight.)
- Deed of Foundation of the HAC.

5.2.3. Internal regulations

Beyond the external framework, the HAC has a set of internal regulations and procedures for each of its activities. The external and internal regulations are listed on the HAC's Hungarian webpage as follows,

European Standards and Guidelines

Legislation governing the HAC's operations

Basic HAC documents
- Deed of Foundation
- Strategy (in English at www.mab.hu/english/doc/Strategy%200906.doc) [9]

Regulations and procedures
- The HAC's by-laws
  - o Code of Ethics (http://www.mab.hu/english/doc/ethics.doc)
  - o Procedures for Board of Appeals
  - o Procedures for Board of Financial Supervisors
- Establishing and operating doctoral schools
- Evaluation of applications for establishing foreign Higher Education Institutions in Hungary (procedure)
- Criteria for evaluating university professorial positions
- Procedure for dealing with institutional action plans

Institutional accreditation second cycle (2004-2011) – time plan
Institutional Accreditation Guidebook and its appendices (October 2007)

      Guidelines
      Appendices:
      1. Accreditation requirements for operating higher education institutions
      2. Accreditation requirements for operating faculties
      3. Accreditation procedure for institutional accreditation

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[9] References to websites are provided where the documents are in English, all others are available in Hungarian at www.mab.hu.

4. Institutional accreditation certificate

Briefing by the HAC's Quality Development Committee for upcoming review teams (January 22, 2008)

Requirements for establishing new faculties or institutions
- Accreditation criteria for new faculties
- Accreditation criteria for new institutions
- Accreditation criteria for foreign higher education institution seeking license to operate in Hungary

Accreditation criteria for Bachelor and Master programs
- Accreditation criteria for education and outcome requirements for Bachelor programs
- Accreditation criteria for education and outcome requirements for Master programs
- Accreditation criteria for new Bachelor and Master programs at institutions
- Accreditation criteria for new Master programs in teacher training

Parallel accreditation of undergraduate programs in specific disciplines
- Time plan for the accreditation of art programs and institutions 2008-2009
- Evaluation methodology for art programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation of art programs
- Guidelines for doctoral schools in art 2008
- Evaluation methodology for history programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for history programs
- Evaluation methodology for psychology programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for psychology programs
- Evaluation methodology for law programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for law programs
- Evaluation methodology for medicine programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for medicine programs
- Evaluation methodology for dentistry programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for dentistry programs
- Evaluation methodology for pharmacy programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for pharmacy programs
- Guidelines for self-evaluation for doctoral schools
- Procedures for awarding places of excellence

5.3. Organization and decision-making

5.3.1. Membership and meeting participation

With the introduction of the new law, the HAC has become a public benefit organization with special legal status effective July 1, 2006. Of its 29 full members, the Hungarian Rectors'

Conference delegates 15, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences three, research institutes five members, and the National Public Education Council and the National Committee for Minorities each delegates one member. Professional organizations and chambers delegate four members. The members receive their letters of appointment from the Prime Minister on recommendation of the Minister of Education and Culture. Two non-voting student members, representing the National Union of Students and the National Union of Doctoral Students, sit in on the plenary meetings. Specifically, the law states in Section 111 (8) that "*one representative of the National Union of Students in Hungary - or in the event of the discussion of an agenda item relating to doctorate programs the representative of the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. Students as well - shall act in advisory capacity at the meetings of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education.*" The HAC appoints additional non-voting members in order to cover all the main disciplines, currently six persons. Members are appointed for a three-year term that may be renewed once. Members elect the HAC president and vice-presidents by secret ballot. The membership list is published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Hungary.

A representative each from the Hungarian Rectors' Conference (MRK), the Ministry (OKM), Hungarian Education and Scientific Council (FTT, an advisory body to the minister), and the National Doctoral Council (ODT, the chairs of the doctoral councils of higher education institutions) are permanently invited to sit in on the public part of the HAC's plenary meetings as observers.

5.3.2. Statutory boards

The new Higher Education Act also established a new appeals procedure against the Committee's decisions, whereby the Board of Appeals of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee reviews appeals. The Board of Appeals has three members, who are former members of the HAC or one of its expert committees.[10] Furthermore, a three-member Financial Supervisory Board was set up in accordance with the law on public benefit entities, which is responsible for overseeing budget implementation.

5.3.3. Expert committees

The HAC has altogether 30 expert committees. The committees for the various disciplines are grouped into three so-called colleges for the main areas of science. The College for Social Sciences, Humanities, Theology and Religion has nine expert committees; the College for

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[10] In the English translation of the act the Board of Appeals is referred to as Review Committee: Section 111 (7) The Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall set up a Review Committee to attend to the tasks defined in Section 106 (8). The Review Committee shall be comprised of three members. One member shall be delegated by the Hungarian Rectors Conference, and the other two members shall be nominated by the membership of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education for a period of three years. Membership in the Review Committee is subject to three years of membership in the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education or in any of its subcommittees, provided that such previous membership has been cancelled. The conflict of interests rules specified in subsection (1) shall also apply to members of the Review Committee.

Life Sciences has four expert committees; and the College for Technical and Natural Sciences has six expert committees. Eleven additional committees are for evaluating university professorial positions; doctoral schools; distance education programs; teacher training programs; degree programs in religion and theology; military and military-technology degree programs. The remaining expert committees are for ethical issues; for quality development; for strategic questions; for special concerns of external stakeholders; and for international matters.

5.3.4. Decision-making

Accreditation decisions of the HAC pass through a hierarchy of bodies. The standing bodies include the HAC plenary, the three colleges made up of HAC members, and expert committees, chaired by a full or non-voting HAC member. External experts act as review team members and external evaluators for paper-based processes. For the procedure on the selection of experts please see under standard 2.4. in section 6.1.

Ex post institutional accreditation involves site visits by review teams, separate ones for each faculty of an institution, involving also a quality assurance expert and a student. The team prepares an evaluation report. An "ad hoc college" is set up with HAC members from the disciplines involved in the evaluated faculty who discuss the reviewers' report and add their own opinions and proposed accreditation decision. The faculty reports are accumulated into an institutional report. This report, without the proposed decision, is sent to the rector of the evaluated institution for comment, and finally goes to the plenary with the rector's comment for the final vote on the accreditation decision. The plenary may also make changes to the final report.

For ex post parallel disciplinary evaluation and accreditation procedures, which examine an entire discipline on all levels at all institutions where it is taught in the country within a short time-span, a pool of reviewers with expertise in the given discipline, including a student. The teams for the actual review are chosen from the pool to avoid conflicts of interest with the visited institution. The pool prepares an in-depth report on the discipline and the individual teaching places, with proposals for an accreditation decisions for each place and level. The report is discussed by the HAC's expert committee for the discipline, then passed on to the appropriate college and finally the plenary.

Ex ante evaluations are paper based. The HAC's program officer in charge of the given disciplines checks the application for formal errors. The application is then given to two evaluators, who prepare their evaluations. The application and evaluations are discussed in the appropriate expert committee for the discipline. The committee may decide to send back the application to the institution for revisions and resubmit it. Once they accept the application, they prepare a report with a proposed accreditation decision, which they pass on to the appropriate college. The college may change the report and/or the decision. The plenary receives both the expert committee's and the college's decision, based on which they make the final accreditation decision.

The decisions going before the plenary are discussed generally a week before the assembly meeting by the presidium. The presidium consists of the HAC president, the chairs of the three colleges, and the HAC members representing teacher training, the stakeholders and the head of the doctoral committee. The meetings are attended by the Secretary General and his deputy.

Organization chart
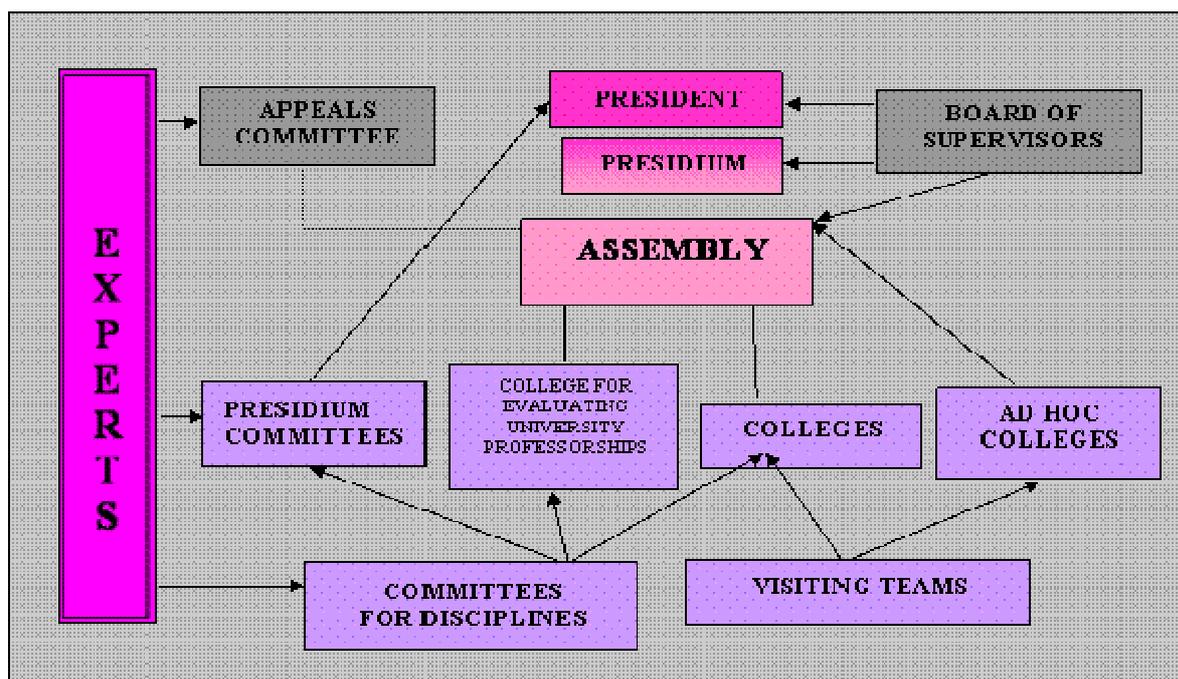
5.3.5. Advisory boards

In addition to the Financial Supervisory Board and the Board of Appeals, the HAC has an International Advisory Board, currently with seven renowned authorities on higher education and quality assurance from different European countries.[11] A Hungarian Advisory Board was set up in 2002 with members from business and industry. Although their advice was considered very useful for the HAC, this board met only once because of time constraints set by the HAC's many other duties. Given its importance, however, a new Hungarian Advisory Board is being set up in the first quarter of 2008.

5.3.6. Secretariat

Next to the Secretary General and a Financial Director, the secretariat has a staff of eleven program officers, four of whom work part-time, and six, including one part-time, administrative staff. The program officers are assigned several expert committees whose work

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[11] The membership of the International Advisory Board can be found on the website at http://www.mab.hu/english/organization2.html

they prepare and assist from inception to completion of the report. In addition they are responsible for several institutions, prepare and participate in site-visits and assist in writing/editing the accreditation report. The daily routine involves desk work on computers with Internet access, contacting and providing information for HAC and external committee members and evaluators as well as the public at large via telephone and e-mail. In compliance with legal regulations, staff members work in accordance with job descriptions.

Each year, the HAC president, the secretary general, and the financial director submit detailed progress reports to the HAC membership. After the HAC approval of these reports a summary report in English appears on the website.

5.4. *Financing*

The Higher Education Act secures the finances for the HAC via "*a special appropriation allocated from the budget of the Ministry of Education*". In fact, the shortage of financial resources has been the most damaging problem in all the HAC's operation for several years. It makes itself felt in a shortage of staff and hence continuous overtime on the part of the program officers and secretariat leadership, coupled with noticeable drops in real wages. Of the 19 staff members ten work as pensioners, two of them working part-time. The given financial resources result in insufficient infrastructural developments, from updating equipment to providing ample office supplies. Just as critically, they preclude serious analyses about the effects of the HAC's actions and decisions or research on developmental options. International activities are limited to those that are reimbursed by the inviting party. The annual budget tug-of-war with the Ministry has become a *modus vivendi*. Although aware of the country's prevailing financial situation, the amount of annual state support to the HAC is fixed in the Higher Education Act and hence should be provided to ensure quality work and the independent existence of the HAC.

With the new budget year for 2008 just beginning at the time of this writing it can be said that the problem is far from being solved. Still it seems that the HAC will not receive the amount that is prescribed by the Higher Education Act. The Law on the 2008 state budget determined a considerably lower sum for the HAC than what would be due on the basis of the so-called 0.2% rule contained in the act.[12]

5.5. *International activities*

In spite of to the long-standing financial constraints, the HAC's international activities have been commendable since its existence. The HAC is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as well as the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network). András Róna-Tas, the founder and first president of the HAC, has been on the Board of all three bodies and chaired the latter. The current secretary general, Tibor

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[12] Section 128 (5): „Provisions shall be made for 0.002 times the aggregate amount of grants available under paragraphs *b)–d)* of Section 127 (3) for the operation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education, …"

Szántó, has continued the function of board member in INQAAHE until spring 2007 and is serving a second term as a member of the board and first-term vice-president of ENQA. The HAC's program officer for foreign affairs, Christina Rozsnyai, acts as secretary general of the CEE Network and is also on the board of the European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Program. György Bazsa, the president of the HAC has participated in the EUA program as a member of the evaluation pool. Tibor Szántó and Christina Rozsnyai also participate in international projects (e.g. TEEP II, holding a training seminar in Albania, helping in refining the quality assurance system in Croatia). The HAC has signed a cooperation agreement with the Spanish quality assurance agency ANECA. In addition, some HAC members and external expert committee members have been invited as experts to review study programs in Estonia and Lithuania, some of them several times. A weakness with regard to foreign developments is their lack of being fed back into the Hungarian system to their full potential. With the high number of decisions at each plenary meeting there is rarely time to discuss international trends at these meetings.

6. HAC compliance with the ESG

6.1. Compliance with ESG Part 2: European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education

2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures: External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

With the introduction of the European Standards and Guidelines, and coinciding with the passing of the new Higher Education Act, the HAC is charged with examining "*whether the higher education institution operates the institutional quality development scheme in an appropriate manner, and whether the quality development objectives defined in the action plan have been implemented*" (Section 110 (1)). While stressing that higher education institutions are primarily responsible for their own quality and quality assurance, the HAC's guidebook for institutional accreditation and annexes describe what aspects an institution's quality assurance and development should cover, namely an adapted version of the ESG, Part 1,

- policy, strategy and procedures for quality assurance
- the launching, monitoring and periodic internal review of study programs
- the assessment of student progress and achievements
- the quality assurance of teaching staff
- learning support, learning resources and student services
- the internal information system
- publicity and public information.

The guidebook explains in detail what features of an institution or faculty are relevant for the given standard and what areas of the institution the HAC will examine for each standard.

The HAC began to incorporate the European Standards into its criteria for institutional accreditation in 2005/06. The HAC launched its second eight-yearly cycle of institutional accreditation in 2004, with a fundamentally new approach as compared to the first cycle. However, the new guidebook was also revised after two years, so that the current one (October 16, 2007) is the third version in the second accreditation cycle. The third, current version is fundamentally new, based fully on the ESG. The two previous approaches, which contained program accreditation elements, trace the HAC's development leading to a separation of the institutional and program accreditation procedures. They also elaborated the elements of the internal quality assurance system to be included in the institution's self--evaluation and to be reviewed by the external evaluators, and in fact introduced the idea of the importance of internal quality assurance at higher education institutions that are now a key feature in the latest guidebook. Evaluation according to the new guidebook began in late 2007.

In program accreditation, the HAC examines the internal quality assurance mechanism for the entire educational process of a given degree program. For the parallel evaluation of degree programs in a given discipline (disciplinary accreditation) each external evaluation team has been working out its own set of criteria, based on a provided framework. Here, again, the development leading to the explicit incorporation of the ESG can be observed, as the early disciplinary accreditation procedures took place before these were adopted with the new Higher Education Act.

The ex ante accreditation of Bachelor and Master programs and of doctoral schools focuses on the academic/professional content, academic staff quality and infrastructural aspects, although for doctoral schools there is a general examination of the internal quality assurance mechanism in these also.

The HAC decided to promote quality culture at higher education institutions by establishing a place of excellence award along with its program accreditation of disciplines. The awards, to be applied for specifically when the disciplinary accreditation process is initiated, are given for three or four years. A separate guideline governs the rules for such awards.

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

Beyond the legal framework, the HAC's By-Laws describe the procedures for each of its activities. Connected to them are the individual guidelines for these tasks, in which the aims and objectives are contained.

The guidelines for ex ante accreditation exhibit a variety of approaches, depending on when and by which expert group or grouping of the HAC they were produced. Arguably, there is a lack of consistency in these approaches. The accreditation guidelines of doctoral schools, developed by the HAC's doctoral committee, are a twelve-page document covering everything

from the legal background to doctoral councils' regulations at universities to the ex ante and ex post accreditation of doctoral schools. The accreditation requirements for setting up new institutions or faculties are brief and concise, concentrating on the legal conditions whose compliance the HAC examines. In the former case the aims and objectives are explicit, in the latter they are implicitly evident. However, with new institutions or faculties, the proposed programs also have to be evaluated, since that is a precondition for their functioning.

For ex post institutional accreditation, the HAC's guidebook provides a clear description of the purposes of the process. Its chapters are

- Foreword by the HAC president
- Accreditation of the operation of an institution and degree programs
  - The conceptual elements behind institutional accreditation
  - The conceptual elements behind program accreditation
- Aspects evaluated for the purpose of institutional accreditation
  - Management and organization on the institutional and faculty levels
  - Teaching and research management and development
  - Quality assurance and development
- Appendices:
  - Accreditation criteria relating to the operation of the institution
  - Accreditation criteria relating to the operation of the faculty
  - Accreditation procedure for institutional accreditation
  - Accreditation procedure for faculty accreditation

The foreword outlines the current situation in Hungary regarding quality assurance in higher education: the fact that this is the second cycle and hence the fundamentals of quality assurance are laid down on the national level; that the whole higher education environment has changed in the wake of the new law and the introduction of the Bachelor/Master system; the ESG; and the separation of the program and institutional accreditation procedures - the pivotal point being the internal quality assurance of institutions. It also explains the stages of quality assurance: continuously updated, public information on the institution's website; self-evaluation; peer review; published report with accreditation decision, a detailed evaluation and recommendations for improvement; monitoring.

The next chapter describes the legal background in which external evaluation and accreditation is embedded and the main features of the institution that will be reviewed. It is followed by a detailed description of the elements to be included in the institution's self-evaluation and guidelines on what to cover for each of them, based on the ESG. The institutions should follow it very flexibly in order to present their special features and profiles.

Separate rules apply for programs in theology and religion at denominational institutions, whereby the content of such programs is not reviewed. The context and management of these programs is evaluated within the institutional accreditation process. In the introductory chapter on the concept of accreditation, the separate procedures for institutional and parallel, i.e. disciplinary program accreditation are described.

These accreditation processes were developed by the HAC'S expert committee for quality development. Prior to that, the Secretariat and HAC leadership laid down a concept that was discussed and approved by the full membership. Discussions with the Hungarian Rectors' Conference accompanied the process, and meetings for quality assurance staff at institutions coming up for review were organized.

The parallel-disciplinary accreditation criteria developed by the team of experts evaluating the particular field are built on a broad consensus, since the teams themselves involve a large pool of relevant experts. When the disciplinary accreditation began with history and psychology programs, beyond establishing two subcommittees involving a wide range of experts, major stakeholders (the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Association of Hungarian History Teachers, and the Hungarian Psychological Society) were consulted. The members of the HAC's expert committees for the relevant discipline develop a detailed methodology and procedures based on standard guidelines provided by the HAC along with accreditation criteria. The aims and procedures are explicitly stated. A sample outline for the accreditation of the discipline of art begins with a short description of the aims of the review followed by sections

- Methodology
    - o Evaluation approach
    - o Evaluation scope
    - o Evaluation elements
    - o Evaluation outcome
    - o Completion of the evaluation
    - o Feedback
- Evaluation and accreditation criteria specific to the arts
- Criteria of excellence
- Appendices
    - o Self-evaluation report
    - o Evaluation interviews
    - o Student evaluation sheet

With each set of criteria and procedures, the whole membership of the HAC is involved, since they have to be passed by vote before going into effect, and it bears responsibility for them. As all major stakeholders are invited to sit in on the public part of the plenary sessions, they may voice their opinions regarding the HAC's procedures and criteria.

Beyond that, the HAC has tried to consult with stakeholders in working out its criteria and procedures in specific cases. The Hungarian Rectors' Conference was asked to comment on the draft documents for ex ante accreditation when the Bachelor and Master programs were introduced. Similarly, when the university professorship criteria were revised in 2007, the Rectors' Conference, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Higher Education and Research Council was consulted. There was no such detailed consultation regarding the separation of ex post institutional and program accreditation procedures, which was due primarily to time constraints before the launching of the 2007/08 set of institutions.

All guidelines and procedures are published on the HAC's website.

2.3 Criteria for decisions: Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

The criteria for all evaluations and accreditation conducted by the HAC are explicit. Following any changes passed in plenary resolutions at least a month should pass before they go into effect. In the past there was a three-month time period, but with the enormous transformation of higher education and the accompanying load of new applications with shorter deadlines set by the new act than was in effect previously (from six to four months for ex ante procedures), this time had to be reduced in order to prevent breaks in the higher education institutions' operation. Criteria are always published on the HAC's website and in print, both as HAC resolutions and in full for each type of procedure.

However, the criteria and procedures that have been developed are not consistent for the various types of evaluations either in structure or elaboration or, for that matter, the depth to which a review is to be conducted. E.g. either the requirement for accreditation is given simply as compliance with a list of items (criteria for establishing new institutions or faculties, though it should be noted that they are accredited together with new programs as a precondition for establishing them), or excessively detailed (the criteria for launching new Bachelor and Master programs, criteria for professorships).

The lack of consistency in several cases in applying the criteria, both between the various expert groups and in the plenary, is a definite weakness of the HAC.

Solving this problem is not made any easier by the fact that in the expert opinion of the HAC, not only measurable factors are to be considered. Evaluation of quality involves and requires not simply counting and measuring but also personal expert judgment. The HAC does not simply measure compliance with quality factors but also weighs such compliance in relation to the external and internal context. This very attribute of the HAC is reflected in its logo, where its acronym makes up a balance.

2.4 Processes fit for purpose: All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

As noted, the various items the HAC evaluates have their own criteria and procedures. Further differentiation are special issues, such as distance education programs, denominational institutions and programs, or foreign institutions, which all have separate, or rather additional criteria for accreditation.

There are no separate guidelines for the selection of experts beyond the procedure set down in the HAC's By-Laws. With ex ante applications, the chairperson of the HAC's expert committee is the sole decision-maker in selecting evaluators (here evaluations are paper-

based). With ex post procedures, the chairperson of the review team is proposed by the HAC president. The chairperson nominates the review team members who are approved by the plenary. For institutional or program review visits the institution has the right to object to the team members.

The HAC's register of experts is in the form of a database with access information on all experts who have worked for the HAC and into which new names are entered when they are invited to do so.

Provisions for briefing experts participating in visiting teams are in place. There are seminars for experts designated for upcoming visits held once a year. In addition, there are briefing meetings prior to the visit, where the review team, together with the program officer in charge, discusses the division of tasks. A discussion of the self-evaluation report is also expected but does not always take place in great detail, however. Therefore, the very latest version of the guidelines for staff members explicitly states that this is an issue that should be addressed at the briefings.

The HAC's philosophy and approach to quality assurance are part of the briefing and are elaborated in more detail in the guidebook. It has been the HAC's philosophy that academic achievement and recognition are preferable over quality assurance expertise, and that extensive training is not feasible in this context. However, over the HAC's fifteen-year history it has acquired an extensive pool of experts who have gained experience in quality assurance. Since 2004/05, quality assurance experts are included in the committees. Greater use of international experts would be desirable but is currently unattainable financially. International experts are invited chiefly in subjects where not enough competent Hungarian experts can be found who have no conflict of interest in the given review, e.g. the accreditation of denominational institutions. Students are invited to participate in visits conducted for institutional accreditation and for parallel, disciplinary program accreditation. Invitation is done solely through the National Union of Students in Hungary and the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. Students, and the participation rate of invited and confirmed students in the visits can be estimated to be roughly 75-80 %.

In institutional and disciplinary program accreditation, where site visits are conducted, the written reports that provide the evidence for the HAC's accreditation decisions are detailed and extensive. In the paper-based ex ante evaluations there is a greater degree of inconsistency. A special problem is the superficiality, with which some evaluators elaborate their recommendation for the accreditation decision. Always two evaluators are required and the expert committee chair may choose to invite a third one where the previous two evaluations differed. The decision-making hierarchy allows for each higher-level body to override the earlier subcommittee's decision, though sometimes without sufficiently elaborating why the original decision was changed. Mostly, the original evaluators' text is carried over to the different levels. This is a systemic weakness of the HAC's decision-making flow but which is difficult to overcome when the number of decisions in each of the bodies is as high as it currently is.

The ex post accreditation decisions always are accompanied by extensive reports with recommendations for improvement and, if necessary, follow-up requirements.

Since the adoption of the new Higher Education Act, appeals against any of the HAC's decisions are possible. A final recourse for higher education institutions is to turn to a court of law if they believe that the HAC did not proceed in accordance with the established legal provisions.

2.5 Reporting: Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

Reports on institutional accreditation are elaborate and the HAC is not aware of complaints about their comprehensibility, though their style necessarily varies according to their authors. They are published on the HAC's website. Disciplinary accreditation reports are equally elaborate and include an extensive analysis of the given field at the time of the review. They have been published in separate volumes as well as the website. All types of reports are written under the auspices of the chair of the group, whether paper-based or visit-based. It includes the visiting team or expert committee's input, the degree of which varies depending on the working style of the group. In each case, a standard format is provided and a program officer on the staff is responsible for editing the report.

2.6 Follow-up procedures: Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

Whereas the HAC had strict follow-up procedures early on, with the new law and derived regulations accreditation is valid "until the next accreditation procedure." Ex ante accreditation does not set an accreditation deadline, being merely a support or non-support decision. Here, the HAC may add comments to improve minor weaknesses. Ex post accreditation is mandatory every eight years. It may be granted for less than the standard eight-year term where the HAC finds weaknesses that should be ironed out in less than eight years. In these cases, the HAC reviews in a follow-up procedure whether the conditions for granting full-term accreditation have been met.

It should be said that the strict monitoring procedures the HAC has prescribed earlier could not be applied consistently, due to the chronically tight work-load of the HAC coupled with the shifting legal environment, when the earlier law was frequently amended as well.

A control mechanism is embedded in the system when a new entity is not supported, but the decision lists the deficiencies of the proposed program, institution, etc. and which the HAC considers such that they may be corrected and the application may be amended and resubmitted. In such cases the HAC re-examines the new application, preferably using the same external and/or internal evaluators.

2.7 Periodic reviews: External quality assurance of institutions and/or programs should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Since its inception, the HAC has worked on an eight-year cycle for ex post accreditation. It is set down in the Higher Education Act.

2.8 System-wide analyses: Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analyzing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

The HAC makes most of its publications available on the website. They include
- Reports on the quality of higher education (irregular)
- The *Quality Gazette*, with the HAC's decisions and major issues discussed (3 per year)
- Yearbook (in Hungarian, annually) and special issues on particular subjects
- Annual Reports (in English)
- Other publications (also those in English).

The HAC publications are usually sent to higher education institutions in hardcopy form. Since 2007, issues of the *Quality Gazette* and the *Yearbook* are distributed to institutions on a prescription basis, in addition to the electronic form on the HAC website free of charge.

Although there are intermittent surveys, there are no regular assessments of the effectiveness of the HAC's work. Again, this is a question of financial and human resources.

A related weakness is that while students applying for study at a higher education institution are very well aware that they can do so only for programs that are published with the approval of the ministry in the annual higher education catalog. However, the catalog does not list the accreditation status of a program. Thus, public awareness about accreditation is not high. What is more, the HAC does not have the resources to raise awareness about the value of accreditation to the general public, which learns about the HAC at most via the media in response to complaints about negative decisions.

6.2. Compliance with ESG Part 3: European standards for external quality assurance agencies

3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education: The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Please see previous chapter.

3.2 Official status: Agencies should be formally recognized by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality

assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

The HAC operates on the basis of the Higher Education Act, principally Sections 109-111, with other parts of the law also applicable. In addition, there is a separate government decree on the HAC (69/2006. /III.28./ Korm. rend.) derived from the act.

For the full list of laws and regulations governing the HAC please see section 4 on "The HAC and higher education accreditation in Hungary."

3.3 Activities: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or program level) on a regular basis.

According to the Higher Education Act Section 110 (1) "*As part of the accreditation duties relating to the establishment and operation of institutions, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee of Higher Education shall c) once in every eight years and in accordance with its work plan ascertain whether the conditions for the pursuance of education, research, and artistic activities are fulfilled, and examine in which area of study, discipline of science and at what level of training the higher education institution satisfies such conditions.*"

The second cycle of institutional accreditation was scheduled with the accreditation dates of the previous round in mind (HAC resolution No. 2005/2/VI/3), although the integration of some universities and colleges that went into effecting 2001 necessarily shifted the deadlines in some cases. Moreover, since the recent separation of the ex post institutional and program accreditation procedures, discrepancies would present themselves in the eight-year pattern for many programs. However, with the introduction of the Bachelor and Master programs and the discontinuation of most single-stream college and university programs the earlier timing is no longer timely. The programs that remain in the single-stream structure, such as law and medicine, whose accreditation could run out earlier, the HAC has already selected to be evaluated by the disciplinary accreditation method, and most of them have been completed in 2007.

The methodology of accreditation varies with ex ante and ex post procedures. These are described in chapter 5.1.1. and under standard 2.4 above.

3.4 Resources: Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organize and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

The lack of resources has been mentioned several times in this report, most prominently in section 5.4. Generally it can be said that while the financial constraints are not fatal in the sense that they threaten the existence of the HAC, the budget due according to the higher education act has not been forthcoming for 2008.

Among others, it has led to a reduction of staff by 20%, from 20.75 to 16.75 full-time equivalent positions, between June 2006 and December 2007. Compared to the 22 staff members in January 2004 the reduction is 24%.

Conversely, a restructuring of the HAC's work plan is precluded by the changes in the higher education structure which put an additional workload on the HAC decision-makers, members and staff. The work overload for staff members precludes systematic staff development.

Since April 2006 higher education institutions have to pay an expert fee to the HAC when requesting its opinion for launching of new Bachelor and Master programs and doctoral schools. This has eased the financial situation a bit but is only a temporary relief, since the surge of new, Bologna type programs is foreseen to subside in the course of 2008.

With the relocation of the HAC's offices in summer 2007 due to the closing down of the previous office building, a smaller office space had to be sought due to the financial constraints. The offices are more centrally located, at the same time less accessible by car, which has raised complaints among some HAC members and experts. The smaller office also poses a challenge for organizing committee meetings and daily work.

3.5 Mission statement: Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

The mission statement was discussed in 5.2.1 above. The current mission statement was accepted by the HAC in a document (resolution 2007/10/VI) titled "The HAC's Quality Assurance." The full text is attached to this report as an appendix.

3.6 Independence: Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Section 109 (1) of the Higher Education Act declares the HAC to be "*an independent body of experts.*" Paragraph 1 (1) of the Government Decree on the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (No. 69/2006. (III. 28.)) designates the HAC as "a public benefit organization with special legal status" that is independent and performs expert tasks on a national scale. According to section 2 of the same paragraph, the minister has the duty to oversee that the HAC complies with all legal regulations. Paragraph 2 (3) states that the organization of the HAC operates independently of political parties, to which it shall not provide financial support or accept support from them, furthermore it shall not conduct political activities.

As far as independence from evaluated colleges and universities is concerned, the law prohibits rectors from being appointed to HAC membership, but the Hungarian Rectors' Conference delegates 15 members. To avoid conflicts of interest in case-by-case decisions in the HAC, it issued a Code of Ethics in 2001. Moreover, the HAC set up an Ethics Committee

early on, which has discussed two cases over the past seven years. HAC members are asked to sign no-conflict-of-interest declarations with respect to the Code of Ethics on taking up their membership and the same is true for standing expert committee members. External evaluators are asked to sign a no-conflict-of-interest clause in their contracts.

External evaluators remain anonymous throughout the entire evaluation process; only the expert committee chair nominating them and program officer in charge know their identity. Their evaluations are not public, but on request the HAC president sends them anonymously to the institution.

All HAC and expert committee members are listed on the HAC website.

It can thus be said that the HAC's decisions are taken autonomously and independently, or, where infringements come to light, the HAC has the procedures in place to deal with them. Nevertheless, the "small country effect" is inevitable and as a result, decisions are occasionally tinged with presumable institutional interests. To counter it, it would be desirable to involve a larger number of foreign experts. Language constraints are one obstacle in this regard, but also financial constraints have stood in the way of this and preclude it in the foreseeable future.

A very recent initiative launched by the HAC's president is what in rough translation would be "Clean Slate HAC", an e-mail address[13] where anyone can write in thoughts, complaints, ethical suspicions or any other issues. The letters are read solely by the HAC president who asks that the authors identify themselves, while the president, in turn, guarantees their anonymity. No experiences on the issue have yet been gathered at the time of this writing.

3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:
- *a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;*
- *an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the HAC;*
- *publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes; a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.*

The HAC has predefined criteria and procedures in place, which are accessible on its website in all cases. The radical and quick changes in the Higher Education Act that affected the entire higher education structure, which sometimes resulted in inconsistencies in the derived legislation and their interpretation, brought with them an unprecedented workload and these undeniably influenced also the consistency of the HAC's decisions.

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For ex post accreditation, the HAC proceeds along the standard procedures: the institution or program submits a self-evaluation report; visiting teams of HAC members and external experts, including a student, conduct site visits following the HAC's elaborate guidelines; the visiting teams produce reports which are discussed in the appropriate expert committees of the HAC and the HAC plenum, which passes a resolution with the decision; and the final report, with analyses and recommendations for improvement, is published. Accreditation may be granted for less than the standard eight-year term, in which case the HAC reviews in a follow-up procedure whether the conditions for granting full-term accreditation have been met. In 2007, the HAC decided to issue a certificate of accreditation for ex post institutional accreditation.

Ex ante procedures involve an application; external evaluation by two, in some cases three experts; discussion in the appropriate expert committees and the plenum and a resolution with the decision. The resolutions and decisions are published on the HAC website.

Appeals against the HAC's decisions may be lodged before the Educational Authority or the minister, depending on the issue, who must request the HAC's Board of Appeals to review the HAC decision. The Board of Appeals is an independent body.

3.8 Accountability procedures: Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

Since 2003 the HAC has from time to time produced various analyses and overviews related to its quality assurance. A quality policy document containing a coherent quality assurance package was adopted by the HAC in December 2007. It was put on the HAC website in spring 2008 also in English. In addition to describing the HAC's quality concept, the document also integrated existing quality management elements. Such elements included quality assurance texts, surveys for review team members as well as institutional leaders after they had taken part in institutional evaluations, and satisfaction surveys among HAC staff. These documents were internal and were not published until very recently, when a separate menu item on internal quality assurance was included on the HAC's website. A few times in the past and also in preparation for the current self-evaluation, HAC members were invited to answer a SWOT questionnaire about the HAC. The results of the latter are summarized in the SWOT analysis in section 6.4. below.

Regarding financial transparency, a publicly accessible menu item has been available on the website since 2004. The Financial Supervisory Board set up in accordance with the new act has been operating since the second half of 2006. They review and analyze the HAC's financial operations annually. As a public benefit organization, the HAC is expected to have its balance sheet audited by an independent auditor, which was completed so far for 2006. Moreover, financing channeled through the ministry under the current legal set-up require the HAC to present a summary financial report to the ministry each year. The acceptance of the report is a precondition for the next year's budget allocation.

The internal reflection mechanisms consist of discussion of the survey results in the plenary and actions. E.g. from feedback from institutional accreditation procedures indicating that the tasks and date required were overburdening, the HAC decided to do away with the earlier, very detailed data tables requested and institutions now compile their data for themselves and to present to reviewers on site when needed. Staff survey results are discussed at regular staff meetings. The current workload leaves increasingly little time both at the HAC plenary and for the staff to reflect on its work. Regular staff meetings are held less frequently as well.

A fundamental feature of the HAC's accountability is its appeals procedure, which covers every type of decision by HAC (see in sections 5.1.1. and 5.3.2 and under standard 3.7 above). Procedures regarding conflicts of interest were discussed under standard 3.6.

The HAC was among the first external quality assurance agencies in Europe to undergo an external evaluation by an independent, international panel organized by the CRE (now EUA) in 1999/2000 (www.mab.hu/doc/extevalhac.pdf).

6.3. Actions taken on recommendations in the 2000 external evaluation[14] of the HAC

Recommendation 1 *The present mode of operation of the HAC can be improved within its traditional definition of tasks and objectives. The following suggestions would be relevant, even if the HAC did not change its scope, as suggested by the Panel, towards a closer linkage of the criteria of academic quality and social relevance, or towards increased emphasis on an improvement-oriented function of quality assurance.*

Action
The scope of the HAC's tasks and objectives are set down in the Higher Education Act and relevant legislation and have basically not changed even with the new act. One crucial change, however, is the focus on the institutions' internal quality management. In thinking about its strategy the HAC has discussed moving towards a quality audit approach in the future, but with internal quality assurance system just recently implemented at all higher education institutions, this has not been possible as an only approach. Fundamental changes have, however, been implemented with the new institutional accreditation guidebook, the disciplinary accreditation, and the publication of the full reports with detailed recommendations for improvement.

Recommendation 2 *The SER presented by the HAC contains suggestions intended to rectify some of its perceived weaknesses. In general the Panel agrees with those suggestions, but some are not seen as being very effective (for instance, WB3: it is hoped that the level of interest...will rise in the near future, WB4: we shall draw the attention of committee chairmen... WC2: We have drawn the attention of program officers... WC3, WC5, WC7, WC8, WC9: Program officer should lay even more stress...). Some are seen as very negative (for*

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[14] http://www.mab.hu/doc/extevalhac.pdf, p. 110-112.

instance WC6 - allowing expert committee members to vote without being present to discuss the resolutions).

Action
The HAC no longer allows its members or expert committee members to vote without being present to discuss the resolutions.

Recommendation 3 *Standards of performance for the HAC, in addition to time schedules and adherence to the law, should be developed and implemented. Such standards should include criteria for reporting, for committee decisions and for feedback to higher education institutions and the society at large. This should enable the HAC to demonstrate where it has achieved its goals and to identify areas for further action and improvement. This implies a move away from presenting the outcomes of HAC's work (SER page 30 and annual reports) purely in statistical terms, or as a series of procedural matters and announcements, towards a presentation of reports that analyses trends and highlights good practice.*

Action
Various such standards are included in the criteria and guidelines for the different tasks. The most detailed of these are in the institutional accreditation guidelines and those for disciplinary accreditation and for launching new Bachelor and Master programs. There is a separate evaluation form to be used by external reviewers for new program evaluations. For the other tasks, the relevant guidelines include the expected report structure.

Analyses of the HAC's evaluations are part of the institutional and disciplinary accreditation reports as well as occasional publications, such as the booklet on Ph.D. education in Hungary,[15] which was discussed by the presidency of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference. Evaluation reports always include proposals for further activity for the institution.

Systematic and ongoing analyses of the HAC's evaluations and operations have not been implemented.

Recommendation 4 *HAC urgently needs to address the problem of excessive bureaucracy and overly complex demands in the collection of material for self-reporting. This has negative consequences for the process. The Panel was informed by institutions that the process was tiresome and, as a result, the component of quality improvement has been neglected. A very thick self-evaluation report is not likely to be heeded or even read. In this respect, the Accreditation Guidebook needs revision.*

Action
The guidelines have been fundamentally revised, as described in this SER. Background data are collected chiefly from the websites of universities and colleges. More recently, the HAC

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[15] András Róna-Tas (HAC Doctoral Committee chair), A Magyar doktori iskolák helyzete és jövője (State and Future of Doctoral Schools in Hungary), Budapest: HAC, 2003, 64 p.

asks for a brief and concise self-evaluation report that includes the key facts and figures on the institution, which the review team may request to be elaborated. Detailed tables with data are no longer requested. Often, however, institutions believe that a more extensive report can provide a better picture about their activities.

Recommendation 5 *The HAC needs to establish clear guidance for Visiting Committee Chairmen on proposals for the composition of the Visiting Committees. This means ensuring a balance of expertise and avoiding over-representation of any one higher education institution or of institutions from the capital. More consistent monitoring of the composition of Visiting Committees by the Secretariat, better guidance to Visiting Committee Chairmen on the optimal composition of Visiting Committees and clear guidance on 'over-representation' of any particular institution or constituency on other committees are all strategies which could mitigate this problem.*

Action
The HAC's By-Laws describe the election procedure, conflict-of-interest rules, and composition of the review teams with respect to the requirement that a quality assurance expert and a student must be included. For expert committees, the requirements are more detailed, including gender and geographic balance.

Recommendation 6 *The HAC needs to publish a Guidebook with a clear code of conduct for members of Visiting Committees, addressing matters such as training and briefing, the purpose of pre-visit meetings, prior study of applications, behaviour during the visits, reporting, etc.*

Action
Visiting (review) team members receive initial briefing during the annual briefing seminar for upcoming teams. A detailed guideline for team members is provided by the HAC. An additional briefing for each team takes place prior to the visit. The briefings concentrate on the purpose and content of the visit but not on codes of conduct or behavior.

Recommendation 7 *The HAC needs to create an internal system of quality assurance. The Panel suggests that the opinions of accredited institutions on the accreditation procedures should be systematically solicited after the visits. Issues such as the behaviour of the visiting experts, their degree of proficiency and their knowledge of the self-accreditation report should be considered. The HAC needs to act on the basis of these assessments as, in its interviews, the Panel heard opinions to the effect that the quality and performance of Visiting Committees were uneven.*

Action
At the end of each year, the review team members and the heads of institutions evaluated the past year are sent questionnaires inquiring about their experiences with the evaluation. The above listed elements are included among the questions. The results are compiled and presented to the HAC plenary. While specific action in response to such results has not been

taken, they were among the factors that have led to the revision of the HAC's guidelines. (It has been a practice of the HAC since the start to send accreditation reports to the head of the evaluated institution for comment prior to the final vote in the HAC plenary.)

Please see also under standard 3.8.

Recommendation 8 *The HAC needs to establish a clear strategy for training members of the Visiting Committees and of the Secretariat.*

Action
As noted, briefing for review teams does take place. Staff member training used to take place in the form of presentations on features of professional quality assurance and management and other related topics. The overwhelming workload has not made the continuation of the training sessions possible in the past two years.

In 2004, the HAC secretariat launched two series of information booklets, one on quality assurance and another on literature review, primarily for internal development purposes for both staff and HAC members. The time constraints and lack of human resources stemming first of all from the introduction of the new degree program structure forced the secretariat to discontinue them.

Recommendation 9 *The HAC needs to review the format, transparency and accessibility of accreditation reports. The current position of two final reports - one detailed and semi-confidential, the other public but often containing no more than a yes/no decision does not provide the sort of information needed by constituents in the society at large. The public impact of these reports, through wide dissemination, is the only real power evaluation agencies can wield.*

Action
The full reports are published since 2004/05.

Recommendation 10 *The importance given to experts holding a scientific degree needs to be attenuated, as it tends to reduce the membership pool for the HAC and limit the choice of experts eligible for the Academy (see 274). This would allow the pool of reviewers to be extended to experts having a background in the arts or in subjects better adapted to the vocational emphasis of the college sector. It would also facilitate participation on the part of representatives of the society at large.*

Action
The current By-Laws do not require scientific degrees except from those expert committee members who come from higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the vast majority do have such degrees. The HAC considers the academic and professional quality of its members a cornerstone for the guarantee of quality of Hungarian higher education.

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Recommendation 11 *The HAC needs to consider options that would better address the more vocationally oriented characteristics of the college sector. One possible solution to this problem would be the establishment of separate chambers for the accreditation of universities and colleges.*

Action

With the new Higher Education Act and the changeover to Bachelor and Master programs, and with one set of education and outcome requirements that do not take education at a college or university into consideration in order to ensure mobility between the two types of institutions, the differences between them are becoming less prominent than earlier, when the practical vs. academic orientation was pronounced. At this transitional time, institutions are seeking to define their profile in this context. The deep-rooted difference between university and college representatives in HAC still prevails in the decision-making.

The HAC's membership includes academic staff members from colleges to represent that sector.

Recommendation 12 *The HAC may consider reviewing the utility and purpose of committees, with a view to reducing their number.*

Action

In 2001 there were 20 standing expert committees for disciplines and 8 others (e.g. professorship applications, ethical issues). At present there are 19 standing expert committees for disciplines and 11 others. After lengthy consideration, the HAC decided that it would not be rational to reduce the number of its expert committees. Even with the present number it is necessary to set up ad hoc committees for specific issues as well.

Recommendation 13 *The Panel suggests that the HAC consider new ways of addressing the issue of programme breadth and interdisciplinarity. For example concurrent review of a group of fields of study, including related interdisciplinary fields, might be a suitable way of solving some problems.*

Action

The introduction of disciplinary accreditation addresses this issue. Whenever called for, the HAC sets up interdisciplinary ad hoc committees.

Recommendation14 *The HAC should continue its international cooperation in the exchange of good practice and benchmarking of standards.*

Action

Please see section 5.5 above.

6.4. SWOT

The major external constraints to the operation of the HAC are the following:

1. Underfinancing, lack of appropriate infrastructure (no space for plenary meetings, which are held in a hotel facility nearby).
2. An overload of tasks, which seriously impacts on
   a. the plenary and expert committee meetings, which are driven by an overloaded agenda,
   b. overburdened staff members, whose excessive workload often results in their frustration
3. Some strategic issues decided without effective HAC involvement. E.g. The HAC has to abide by regulations for teacher training while the majority of its members challenge the general framework. Consequently, related HAC decisions are passed based on disputable principles.
4. The problems and contradictions inherent on the system level in the transformation demanded by the Bologna process.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Commitment on the part of the HAC membership to ensure the quality of higher education • Dynamic and competent leadership • Experience from active international presence of some members and staff feeds back into HAC process • In spite of occasional criticism the HAC is a generally respected player in Hungarian higher education • Activities embedded in structured legal framework, in this sense transparency and acceptance in higher education community • Experience, proficiency and work ethic of staff members • International embeddedness and up-to-date knowledge of trends	• Too many tasks for given resources, which may hamper quality work • Consistency of decisions varies occasionally, both between the decision-making levels and over time • Given the hierarchical decision-making structure there is not always enough time to consider middle- and upper-level decisions thoroughly enough • Internal quality assurance is not sufficiently comprehensive, quality loop and emphasis on feedback and action on established weaknesses are not adequately integrated into the system • Lack of willingness of external experts to be thoroughly trained • No research on effectiveness of processes • No adequate dissemination of information about the HAC and accreditation to the wider public beyond posting on website
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Strengthening output evaluation	• Overly rigid legal framework inhibits

(more consistent consideration of employers' views)
• Improvement of transparency and consistency in decision-making
• More steady workload once the tasks following from the implementation of the Bologna process are accomplished
• Exploitation of database and Internet possibilities in every-day work and reduction of paper-based work
• Increase in public awareness of the HAC's work and implementation of public feedback
• Competition from (international) quality assurance organizations
	flexibility to change
	• Too many areas require either ex post or ex ante accreditation (or both), resulting in accreditation "overkill"
	• Underfinancing of HAC
	• Rushed transformation of the higher education environment leads to inconsistencies in regulations and content
	    o Contradictions and loopholes in legislation
	    o Hurried decisions in HAC that lead to inconsistencies that are hard to remedy
	• Inability to restrain burgeoning of ever new degree programs
	• Threat of fragmentation of master programs and specialties
	• The strong motivation, due mostly to financing structure, by higher education institutions to put quantity (student numbers, numbers of programs, etc.) above quality
	• General drop in higher education quality mainly due to mass education and low quality secondary education

6.5. Final Reflections

The fundamental changes in the structure of Hungarian higher education are affecting the functioning of the higher education institutions and the knowledge production for Hungarian society in the future. The separation of provision into Bachelor/Master levels should serve – as it does worldwide – as a suitable instrument for separating mass education and elite education, as opposed to the old structure, which served elite education in a mass educational environment. In this atmosphere, quality assurance in this country is facing both challenges and opportunities. Due to the extreme speed of change, the HAC has been overwhelmed with the number of applications for new programs, while continuing its remaining regular tasks as required by law, namely institutional accreditation, the evaluation of professorship applications and doctoral schools. Could it have rescheduled the many tasks more rationally? Would quality have been better served with a different approach? In many ways, the HAC has met the enormous challenges in a professional way. It has adapted its work to international requirements (the European Standards), has restructured its approach (separating institutional and program accreditation), has worked out successive strategic plans with a view to the

future of Hungarian higher education embedded in the European Higher Education Area. The greatest challenge is to find adequate resources to allow it to contemplate the concept of quality in the future and adapt its processes accordingly. Additional human and financial resources are needed to liberate capacity for meeting more than the urgent task at hand. The HAC hopes that in a few months, when the last pack of new program applications has been dealt with, a more in-depth approach to quality assurance will become possible.

It is the aim of the HAC that higher education institutions should come to look at accreditation as an opportunity to show and prove their values and strengths on the one hand, and on the other to use the recommendations of the HAC and its experts to improve their weaknesses. Only together will the institutions and the HAC be able to overcome the remnants of a compliance culture, where external evaluation is viewed as a threat, and join hands in their efforts to enhance the quality and competitiveness of Hungarian higher education. The HAC hopes that its external review will contribute to this process.

6.6. Appendices

1. Terms of Reference
2. ENQA Guidelines for reviews
3. Legal changes affecting the HAC with the 2005 higher education act
4. The 2005 Higher Education Act
5. The HAC's Mission and quality policy statement
6. The external review of the HAC in 2000
7. Sample from ministerial decree on qualification and outcome requirements for degree program in Chemical Engineering (in Hungarian). The full decree can be found at http://www.okm.gov.hu/doc/upload/200802/kepzesi_es_kimeneti_kovetelmenyek_080228.pdf
8. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee and its Work in 2006. Annual Report
9. International Advisory Board members from 1995-2009. (The recommendations of the boards since 2003 are available at http://www.mab.hu/english/a_organization.html)
10. Last issue of the *Accreditation Gazette* (Akkreditációs Értesítő) 2007/3 (in Hungarian)
11. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (leaflet).

Additional documents can be found on the HAC website at www.mab.hu
and on the website of the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education at www.okm.gov.hu.