

Hungarian Accreditation Committee External Evaluation 2018

Self-Assessment Report



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Facts and figures about Hungary, higher education and HAC

Population	9.818 million (2016)*
Currency	Hungarian forint (HUF)
GDP per capita	12,664.85 USD (2016)*
Number of HEIs**	66, which comprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 state universities • 7 non-state universities (of which 5 are church-maintained and 2 are post-graduate foundation institutions), • 5 state universities of applied sciences • 2 two non-state universities of applied sciences, • 2 state colleges, and • 28 non-state (mostly church-maintained) colleges
Number of newly enrolled students 2017/18	72 641 (47 684 Bachelor, 11 540 Master, 7 462 single cycle Master-level, 5 955 higher education VET)
Number of enrolled PhD students 2016	2404
Tertiary education attainment (25-34 year-olds)	32% (OECD average 41%)
HAC established	1993
Years of external reviews, organiser	2000 (CRE), 2013 (ENQA), 2015 (ENQA due to “full member under review” status)

* World bank

** September 2017



1. Introduction

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) was established by an act of parliament in the first Higher Education Act in 1993. According to the most recent act of 2011 the HAC is a national-level, independent body of experts tasked with the external evaluation of the quality of educational activities and the internal quality assurance (QA) systems of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Hungary. It elaborates its own rules of procedure and criteria for evaluation and operates within the scope of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2002, when the organisation opened its membership to non-EU applicants (Hungary joined the EU in 2004), and has been reviewed for compliance with the ESG by ENQA in 2008 and 2013. Following its “full member under review” status after the 2013 evaluation, its full membership was reconfirmed in 2015.

In December 2016, on initiation of its new president, the HAC Board approved a new mission statement and strategy and an action plan in January 2017¹. The strategy, which followed the completion of the third institutional accreditation cycle, intends to steer the HAC into an increasingly service-oriented agency whose activities support HEIs in enhancing their internal QA systems.

With this self-assessment report, HAC seeks to renew its full membership in ENQA. At the same time, it is applying for the first time for inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The HAC continues to attach high importance to its membership in ENQA. On the one hand, it provides the HAC the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the ongoing discussion on higher education QA within the European Higher Education Area. Moreover, ENQA membership and inclusion in EQAR are quality seals confirming for the HAC and its internal and external stakeholders that it meets international standards. The HAC looks forward to the recommendations by the ENQA review panel that will support the HAC in enhancing its internal quality and its work with HEIs.

This self-assessment report aims to present the context of the HAC and its work and describe its activities within the framework of the ESG. The report is the product of a collaborative effort by the HAC’s self-assessment ad hoc commission, members of the secretariat and input from HAC members and the HAC’s International Advisory Board (IAB).

¹ Implementation of the HAC strategic objectives. Action plan 2017-2018, at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/HAC_Strategy_2017_18_Action_Plan.pdf



2. Development of the self-assessment report (SAR)

At its plenary meeting on 7 July 2017, the HAC passed a decision to initiate its external evaluation for the purpose of renewing its membership in ENQA, and at the same time to apply for inclusion in EQAR. The review is to be coordinated by ENQA. Members also voted to set up a self-assessment commission to guide the self-assessment process and external review. On the same day, the HAC initiated its external review with a letter to ENQA.

The self-assessment commission comprised

- Gyula BAKACSI, HAC member, chair of expert commission on VET programmes and co-chair the expert commission on social sciences
- Tamás Töhötöm KAIZINGER, delegate from the National Union of Students
- Katalin É. KISS, HAC member, chair of expert commission on humanities
- Gábor L. KOVÁCS, HAC member, chair of the expert commission for medical education
- László T. KÓCZY, HAC member, chair of the expert commission for engineering
- József TOPÁR, associate professor at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, QA expert, chair of the HAC ESG 2015 ad hoc committee
- Christina ROZSNYAI, HAC programme officer for foreign affairs, SAR commission chair
- Andrea SEREGDY, HAC programme officer.

The commission first met in September 2017 to establish the basic concept and content of the self-assessment process and report, and the SWOT analysis process. In subsequent meetings and e-mails, the commission checked the progress of the report and clarified open issues, taking into consideration the recommendations in the ENQA review reports from 2013 and 2015.

A SWOT analysis was requested of all HAC Board members and all members of the HAC staff. The replies were analysed and summarised by the HAC Quality Assurance Standing Committee and then fed into the SAR. The summary of the SWOT is contained in *Annex 2*.

In order to collect feedback on the work of the HAC from external stakeholders, a survey was conducted among HEIs in spring 2017. Their responses are also reflected in this SAR.

The self-assessment commission finalised the SAR on 4 December 2017 and the HAC Board approved it at its plenary meeting on 15 December.

The structure of the SAR separates the focus on the descriptive and analytical parts. Sections 3 to 6 describe QA practices in Hungary and by the HAC. The sections on the individual standards are meant to concentrate on the evidence for the standard and on self-reflection and analysis.



3. Higher education and quality assurance of higher education in the context of HAC

In Annex 1 to the Higher Education Act 2011, as of September 2017 Hungary has 66 HEIs. They comprise 22 state universities, seven non-state universities (five church-maintained and two post-graduate foundation institutions), five state universities of applied sciences and two non-state universities of applied sciences, two state colleges, and 28 non-state (mostly church-maintained) colleges. State universities and colleges have the vast majority of the student population, with about two thirds in state universities and another 20 percent in state colleges.² For the academic year 2017/18 there were 72 641 students in total accepted into higher education. Of these, 47 684 were accepted into Bachelor, 11 540 into Master, 7 462 into single-cycle Master-level, and 5 955 into higher education VET programmes.³ The number of PhD students enrolled in September 2016, the last date where complete figures are available, was 2404.⁴

Universities and colleges of applied sciences are a very recent development, enabled by law in 2015 and created with some mergers of faculties from other institutions and the removal of the criterion for universities to provide doctoral education, as a result of which some colleges were reclassified as universities. The definition of the categories and an overview of the Hungarian higher education system is summarised on the Eurydice website adapted here.

Hungary's Fundamental Law (Constitution) ensures the freedom of scientific research and artistic creation, the freedom of learning for the acquisition of the highest possible level of knowledge and the freedom of teaching. The State has no right to decide on questions of scientific truth; only scientists have the right to evaluate scientific research. HEIs are autonomous in terms of the content and the methods of research and teaching; their organisation is regulated by an act.

Pursuant to the justification of the Higher Education Act (submitted to Parliament before adoption), Hungarian higher education aims, while serving the public good, to transmit competitive knowledge, to ensure the nation's intellectual and economic development, to provide transparent and competitive theoretical and applied education, to perform basic and applied scientific research and pursue innovation, as well as to educate the new generation of teachers and researchers.

HEIs are autonomous institutions; their autonomy mainly covering educational and academic activities and research. Their organisational order and operation can be adjusted within the

²Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development. Facts and Figures Higher Education in Hungary (2011) p. 12 http://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/ff_konyv_lr1.pdf

³https://www.felvi.hu/felveteli/ponthatarok_rangsorok/friss_statistikak/!FrissStatistikak/friss_statistikak.php?stat=1

⁴ Figure supplied by the Educational Authority



regulatory framework and their management should comply with the Act on Public Finance and the Act on State Property.

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, the core activities of HEIs include education, academic research, and artistic creation. The educational core activity of the HEI extends to include higher education vocational training (VET), Bachelor programmes, Master programmes, doctoral programmes and post-graduate specialist training. Exclusively HEIs undertake these core activities. They are responsible for identifying and recognising students with outstanding skills and abilities capable of outperforming curriculum requirements, as well as disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged students, and for facilitating their professional, academic, artistic and sporting activities.

Universities, universities of applied sciences or colleges (non-university HEIs) qualify as HEIs in Hungary. Universities are HEIs authorised to provide at least eight Bachelor and six Master programmes and offer doctoral programmes and award doctoral degree, provided that at least 60% of their teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree, operate students' academic workshops supporting student research, projects and publications, and are able to provide studies in foreign languages in some of their programmes.

A university of applied sciences is a tertiary institutions with at least four Bachelor programmes and two Master programmes, and at least two dual trainings (if its accreditation includes engineering, IT, agriculture, nature science or business studies), where at least 45% of its teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree, operates an academic student workshop, and has the capacity to offer foreign language courses at some of its departments.

Colleges are tertiary institutions having at least one third of their teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis with a doctoral degree. Colleges are entitled to operate an academic student workshop.

Universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges are also authorised to provide training that do not result in a higher education degree (higher education vocational training, post-graduate specialist training).

HEIs may be established in Hungary individually or with another entity with relevant permission by the state, an ethnic minority government, a church with legal entity, a commercial entity with a seat in Hungary, and by any foundation, public foundation registered in Hungary, organisation carrying out religious activity, and in certain cases defined by law, a board of a private tertiary institution financed by an international organisation that exercises the rights of founders and maintainers of the institution. The individual exercising founder's rights should undertake tasks in connection with the operation of the HEI. The HEI is established based on a state recognition by Parliament. State-recognised institutions are listed in Annex I of the Higher Education Act. The Hungarian Rectors' Conference is entitled by law to represent HEIs and to protect their interests.



The government and the Minister responsible for higher education play a key role in the governance of higher education; they fulfil tasks relating to organisation, development and legal control and, in the case of state HEIs, exercise operator's rights. Operator oversight may not encroach the academic autonomy of the HEI.

The Educational Authority is an administrative body established by government, acting as a higher education licensing centre: it registers HEIs as well as the start or modification of their activities. It also carries out official inspections and keeps an official register on institutions. Furthermore, it operates the higher education information system (a central system based on data provided by HEIs.)

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is a national expert body promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the quality of higher education, scientific research, and artistic creation, which participates in procedures relating to HEIs, with special regard to doctorate schools. The National Doctoral Council is a body consisting of the chairs of the doctoral councils of HEIs, adopting positions on matters relating to doctoral programmes and the conferral of doctoral degrees.

The Higher Education Planning Board promotes the link between tertiary education and the labour market. The Dual Training Council ensures quality assurance and assessment of the work-based learning component of dual training. The Council of National Scientific Students' Academic workshops is responsible for the national representation and coordination of students' academic and artistic activities pursued in HEIs and the national representation and coordination of the students' academic workshops movement, as well as the organisation of nationwide scientific and artistic forums for students. The national representation of students is performed by the National Union of Students in Hungary, while the national representation of students pursuing doctoral studies is performed by the Association of Hungarian PhD Students.

The three-cycle degree structure was introduced in September 2006.

The multi cycle system offers education at Bachelor (BA/BSc) level that lasts 6-8 semesters, which can be followed by Master (MA/MSc) level courses of 4 semesters (except for teacher training). The third cycle provides PhD programmes. Besides multi cycle courses, there are a few study fields where single-cycle programmes were retained, leading to a Master degree. Prerequisite for participating in a doctorate programme is a Master degree.

There are also post-graduate specialist trainings for graduates holding a Bachelor or Master degree, launched by HEIs, which confer certification on the level of the programme.

In addition, there are short-cycle higher education vocational trainings of 4 to 5 semesters provided by HEIs, which are conditional on the secondary school leaving examination and result in an advanced vocational qualification. Part of the ECTS credits obtained during this training must be recognised in relevant Bachelor programmes, as provided for by law.

Higher education is governed by a sectoral act and related government decrees regulating its implementation. These stipulate the most important provisions and rules applicable to the



operation of higher education. Several other relevant government decrees and Ministerial decrees stipulate partial regulations. Furthermore, various acts on the system of public finances and its sub-systems also apply to the operation of HEIs depending on their status and whether or not they rely on public funding.⁵

There is a clear distinction between state and non-state institutions. Non-state institutions can be founded by churches, business organisations or foundations. The foundation and operation of non-state institutions is subject to the same input (quality) criteria as the foundation and operation of state institutions and compliance is checked in the course of accreditation at the time of foundation. Institutions meeting the criteria are granted state recognition by Parliament. State and non-state institutions recognised by the state are listed in Annex I of the Higher Education Act. Only organisations included in the annex may provide higher education. The establishment and operation of non-state HEIs are regulated by the Higher Education Act and related regulations. Non-state institutions also receive state funding, based on an agreement with the government. However, the budget of both state institutions and non-state institution is only partly financed by the state. The state grant provided for institutions maintained by the Roman Catholic Church is governed by a concordat concluded between Hungary and the Vatican and the Hungarian government has concluded similar agreements with other historical churches (the Protestant Church and Israelite Church) for funding their HEIs.⁶

Some statistical data on higher education may be of interest, presented here in a summary from a 2015 OECD report.

Vocational education and training can ease entry into the labour market. In Hungary, fewer students (26%) than the OECD average (46%) were enrolled in VET programmes at upper secondary level. The rising dropout rate in vocational schools (nearly 30%) is a source of concern.

Access to tertiary education is possible for students who obtain the secondary school leaving certificate. Admittance is competitive, based on entrance scores earned above the minimum scores defined annually by government. Hungarian students can access tertiary education in both universities (academic focus) and colleges (applied focus). Outstanding universities can be qualified as research universities, and outstanding colleges can be qualified as universities of applied sciences. Tertiary education attainment levels among young adults (25-34 year-olds) in Hungary (32%) is below the OECD average (41%). The number of people entering tertiary education has declined over the past several years. Tertiary education credentials are rewarded in the labour market: 25-34 year-old degree holders in Hungary can expect to earn on average 78%

⁵Adapted from: European Commission Eurydice: Higher Education (last modified 21 October 2016).
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Higher_Education

⁶European Commission Eurydice: Types of HEIs (last modified 21 October 2016).
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Hungary:Types_of_Higher_Education_Institutions



more than their peers who have only upper secondary education (the average OECD earning premium is 41%).⁷

Finally, the table below provides an overview of the Hungarian higher education structure.

Table 1: The higher education system

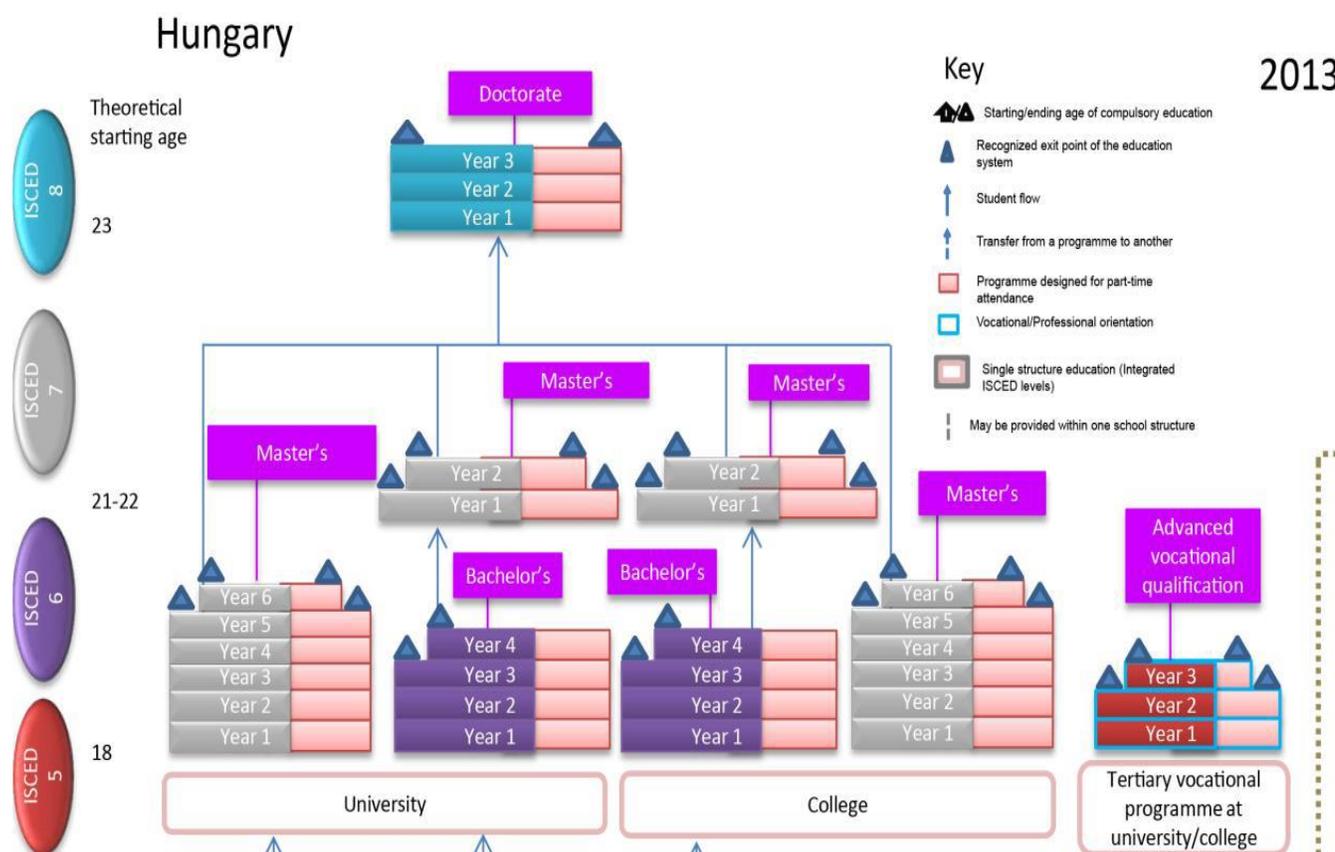


Table: Education Policy Outlook: Hungary, OECD (2015) p. 19

⁷Education Policy Outlook: Hungary, OECD (2015) p. 9. <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Hungary-Profile.pdf>

A compact summary of the Hungarian higher education system can be found also at <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/hungarco.htm>

Two additional sources on Hungarian higher education are http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/industry-and-services/supporting-entrepreneurship-and-innovation-in-higher-education-in-hungary_9789264273344-en#page32

and http://unipub.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/2828/1/Strat_progress_Report_Hungary_2016.pdf



4. History, profile and activities of HAC

The HAC was established in a joint agreement of Hungarian universities with the country's first Higher Education Act of 1993, four years after Hungary regained its independence. As such, it was one of the earliest QA agencies in Europe and was active in the development of the field internationally. The founding president served on the boards or steering groups of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAAHE), CRE (now merged into the European University Association, EUA), the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (now Association, ENQA) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEE Network, now CEENQA). Building on this history, the HAC has developed and renewed its QA approach several times over the years. Nevertheless, it has conducted accreditation from the beginning, while in the western countries of Europe, quality evaluation was the preferred approach. The merging of accreditation with evaluation, that is, QA through enhancement with a definite quality judgment, has been the HAC philosophy from the start, however, and that continues to this day.

A number of factors have recently driven the need for change at the HAC. For one, a new higher education strategy issued by the government⁸ lays particular emphasis on QA. Other reasons include the issue of the new ESG in 2015 that were to be implemented by national HEIs and national agencies by spring 2016. That deadline coincided with the final phase of the third cycle of institutional accreditation in Hungary, and the HAC recognised the need to design a new approach to accreditation at this point. At the same time, the HAC president appointed in 2012 resigned as of 1 May 2016 due to other commitments and the new president took office with some months delay on 1 September 2016. Several issues that demanded change were recommended in the 2013 and 2015 ENQA reviews and were among the Recommendations of the HAC's IAB. The IAB recommended in 2016 "that HAC broaden its concept of what constitutes quality" and pointed to a previous year's recommendation to "...focus on the role of the HAC in helping to enhance the internal QA of HEIs in a holistic way that goes beyond curricular and resource aspects but looks at the quality of the student life-cycle and involves governance and managerial aspects, all of which must be seen as a continuous institutional process." The IAB went on to advise the HAC "to focus decisively on the overarching educational objectives and the development of students' competencies aligned to these".

These and other recommendations are reflected in the HAC Strategy 2017-2018, adopted by the HAC Board on 9 December 2016. A key element in the strategy is the re-alignment of how the HAC sees itself as a stakeholder within the higher education community. Within the scope of its legal mandate

⁸Ministry Strategy (2015): *Fokozatváltás a felsőoktatásban. A teljesítményelvű felsőoktatás fejlesztésének irányvonalai* (Changing Gears in Higher Education. Guidelines for the Development of Performance-based Higher Education). Ministry of Human Capacities. Budapest.
<http://www.kormany.hu/download/d/90/30000/fels%C5%91oktat%C3%A1si%20koncept%C3%B3.pdf>



to evaluate the quality of teaching, research, development and innovation, and activity in arts, as well as the internal QA systems at HEIs, the HAC lays emphasis on quality enhancement and supporting the embedding of a quality culture in colleges and universities. The methodology of accreditation has become familiar to HEIs over the repeated accreditation cycles; however, the degree to which they have internalised a quality culture still varies to a great extent between the HEIs.

In light of these developments, a dedicated HAC working group has developed institutional accreditation criteria according to the ESG 2015; five institutions of various types have been evaluated in summer and autumn 2017. The HEIs undergoing this new type of institutional quality evaluation were included as stakeholders in the discussions of the new criteria to be introduced.

There are continuing challenges to be faced by HAC in the coming years. One of these is the nomination/delegation process and appointment of HAC's Board members. Nine of the 20 Board members are delegated by the Ministry of Human Capacities, which comprises education, and the remainder by other stakeholders. This has resulted in an imbalance in gender as well as in scientific and professional backgrounds of Board members. The gender issue has been among the recurring recommendations of the HAC's IAB. Of the 20 HAC Board members, only two are women, including the president. With the term of the HAC Board ending on 28 February 2018, consultations within and between the delegating bodies have started in autumn 2017 in order to achieve a greater balance in the Board's composition. The HAC's president has initiated several consultations with the delegating bodies to take into account these aspects.

A further challenge is the more extensive employment of foreign experts in evaluations. The HAC hasn't had and still does not have a foreign expert pool due to various factors (no established expert pool, limited language proficiency of the committee members and staff, limited budget). However, these problems have to be solved in the coming years.

Among recent achievements counts the fact that the HAC has obtained additional funding on top of its annual budget and has boosted its human resources in the secretariat. Moreover, internal restructuring of the staff work processes has taken place and a new expert commission structure is foreseen after the new HAC Board takes over. An up-to-date IT system is also on the drawing board.

Legal background

Two main pieces of legislation govern the HAC, the Higher Education Act of 2011 and its amendments, and the Government decree 19/2012 on higher education QA and enhancement. Articles 70 and 71 of the Higher Education Act 2011 determine the tasks and status and the compositions and operations of the HAC. Article 70 (1) declares that

“The HAC is an independent national expert body established for the purposes of the external evaluation of the quality of educational, academic, research and artistic activities performed in higher education and the internal quality assurance systems operated by higher education institutions, and the provision of expert services in the procedures related to higher education institutions, as provided for in this Act.”



HAC is a legal entity and draws up its own rules of organisation and operations, which are approved by the Minister but who may not refuse their approval unless they are in violation of law.

The government decree regulates the HAC's legal and financial management obligations as a public entity and determines the tasks beyond those set down in the Act, quoted above.

The full set of regulations governing the operations of the HAC are listed in *Annex 3*.

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.

- **Mission Statement**
- **ESG**
- **Legal Documents**
- **Basic HAC documents**
 - Deed of Foundation of the HAC
 - Strategy 2017-2018
 - Action Plan 2017-2018
- **Regulations and procedures**
 - By-Laws
 - Regulation on Recognition of Accreditation Issued by Another Entity for a Higher Education Institution
 - Procedures for the Board of Appeals
 - Procedures for Board of Financial Supervisors
 - Code of Ethics
 - Publication of public data
 - Access to public data

In summer 2017, the HAC began to review and update its by-laws, in part to reflect the goals set down in the strategy and to simplify the format. The process is ongoing.

In addition to the tasks of the HAC set down in Article 70 (1) of the Higher Education Act, it has the legal mandate (Article 67 (4)a)) to provide its opinion on the quality of individual HEIs in line with the ESG for the purpose of reviewing operating licenses by the Educational Authority every five years, a process that started in spring 2017 (please see under activities in Section 5).



Organisation

The organisation of the HAC is determined in part by legislation while the internal structure is established by the HAC itself. The HAC Board and two statutory boards are regulated. The internal committee set-up is determined by the HAC in line with its strategic goals. The expert committee structure described below reflects the ratio of applications leaning heavily towards new programme applications (see *Table 4*), which have to be discussed with a focus on given disciplines. Other committees were set up for specific purposes and two of them, for VET and for teacher training programmes, are being discontinued after March 2018. Two advisory bodies were set up by the HAC to bring an external stakeholder and an international perspective to its work.

HAC Board

The composition and delegating bodies to the HAC Board are set down in the Higher Education Act (Article 71 (1)). The Board has 20 members, all of them are Hungarian. Nine members are academics delegated by the Minister of Human Capacities; two by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; one by the Academy of Arts; three by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference; two by representatives of churches that maintain HEIs; and one each by the Hungarian Chamber of Trade and Industry, the National Union of Students and the Union of PhD Students. All except for the students must hold a scientific degree. Rectors, chancellors, public and civil servants may not be on the Board. The president of HAC is chosen from among the Board members in agreement between the Minister and the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The term of the Board members is six years and may be renewed once, except for students, whose term is two years.

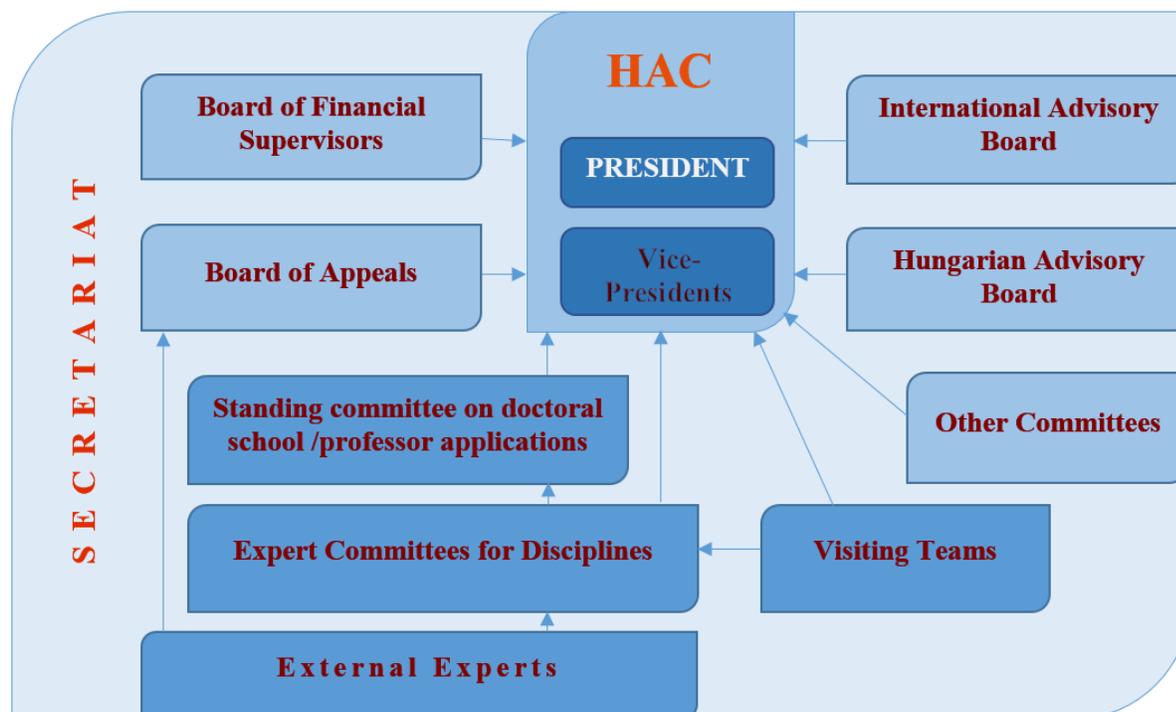
The Board is the final decision-making body and determines the by-laws, rules of procedure, organisation and evaluation and accreditation criteria and procedures, and passes resolutions on accreditation decisions. The Government Decree 19/2012 requires the by-laws to be published on the HAC website and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

The organisation chart in *table 2* below shows the HAC's various bodies, which are discussed in the succeeding sections.



Table 2: HAC Organisation Chart

Organisation chart



Statutory boards

Board of Financial Supervisors

The HAC has a Board of Financial Supervisors, as is legally mandated for public benefit organisations. Its composition and scope of activity is set down in the Government Decree 19/2012. Its task is to oversee the HAC's financial operations.

It has three members appointed by the Minister, with one member recommended by the Rectors' Conference and a second by the Academy of Sciences. Their mandates are for six years and are renewable. They receive a legally set semi-annual fee and are *ex officio* invited to participate in the public part of the HAC plenary meetings.

The Board meets at least twice a year to review the HAC's finances. If there is any change in financial regulations, the Board of Financial Supervisors has to check them before forwarding them to the HAC Board for approval. Once a year, always at the May HAC Board meeting, the Board of Financial Supervisors submits a financial review on the results of the previous fiscal year, and includes comments on identified trends and recommended actions.



Board of Appeals

The Higher Education Act (Article 71(5)) stipulates a Board of Appeals for the HAC, which has three members who are delegated by the Minister. HAC Board members in the previous three years are excluded. Their mandates are for six years, once renewable, and they receive monthly fees equal to those of the HAC Board members.

The Board of Appeals operates independently of the HAC Board, and its members are invited to participate in the public part of the HAC Board’s plenary meetings. Their task is to review cases based on the same standards and criteria applied by the HAC and its committees. Their activities are described in more detail under ESG 2.7.

Expert and other committees

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

Expert committees for disciplines

- Agriculture (19 members, including chair)
- Humanities (18)
- Religion and theology (10)
- Engineering (19)
- Art (17)
- Medicine (20)
- Social sciences (20)
- Natural sciences (17)

Other committees

- Standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications (10)
- Ad hoc committee on conflict-of-interest and ethics issues (ad hoc)
- Standing Committee on Higher vocational education (VET)⁹ (8)
- Quality assurance standing committee (since July 2017) (13)
- Strategy committee (5)

⁹ and ¹⁰ The HAC decided to discontinue the Standing Committees on VET Education and Teacher Training Applications after March 2018 due to a low number of applications and to assign these applications to the relevant disciplinary committees.



- Standing committee on teacher training applications¹⁰ (14)¹¹.

Advisory boards

The HAC has an International Advisory Board (IAB), currently with seven renowned authorities on higher education and QA from different European countries.¹² A Hungarian Advisory Board was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, re-established in 2012 with seven members from business and industry.¹³ Both meet once a year and review the work of the HAC. The International Board issues formal recommendations.

Secretariat

In January 2017 the new HAC president initiated the first changes in the staff in agreement with the 2017-2018 strategy and action plan. The position of the Secretary General (employed earlier as staff member of the Secretariat) is not filled at the time of this writing. The new role of a new Secretary General who would be elected by the HAC Board requires changes in the HAC by-laws, which will be a task of the new Board after March 2018. The Secretariat is led by the Head of Secretariat who is responsible for organising the Secretariat's daily work, including the administrative support of the Board, the committees and the Board of Appeals, and for the administrative support for all above mentioned tasks of HAC, including the official information on the Board's decisions. The Head of Secretariat is responsible for organising and supervising the programme officers' and administrators. However, the HAC's long-standing shallow organisational structure of its Secretariat is no longer effective and one of the challenges is to change it. While there is no longer a critical shortage of staff, the number of programme officers with higher education degrees and QA expertise as well as high level English proficiency requires new recruitment as well as a staff training strategy. The continuous recommendations of the IAB to recruit younger officers is in part fulfilled. Five years ago HAC reported that six of sixteen employees worked after retirement, that ratio is four of 14 as of December 2017, with the financial director and the IT administrator, well over retirement age, leaving the Secretariat in spring 2018. Between September 2016 and December 2017, seven younger staff members (Head of Secretariat, four programme officers, and two administrators) have been hired, and two program officers' working contracts were changed from part-time to full-time. Further recruitment is ongoing.

The Secretariat encompasses the Head of Secretariat, the Financial Director, the IT administrator, seven programme officers, three of them part-time (30-35 workhours per week), and four administrative staff. The programme officers are responsible for several disciplinary and other

¹¹ Committee membership and composition at

http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=83&Itemid=505&lang=hu

¹²The members of the IAB and their recommendations are at

http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en

¹³The membership of the Hungarian Advisory Board can be found on the website at

http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en



committees and several HEIs. With expert committees, work includes preparatory tasks as well as assisting the chairs. With institutional and programme evaluations they prepare and participate in site-visits and assist in composing and editing the accreditation report. The daily routine involves deskwork on computers with Internet access, contacting and providing information for HAC Board and external committee members and evaluators as well as the public at large via personal consultation, telephone and e-mail. In line with legal regulations, staff members work in line with job descriptions and rules set down in a staff handbook.

Decision-making

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

A dedicated committee on university professor and doctoral schools applications is responsible for applying quality criteria set by HAC for all disciplines and has to ensure consistency and the realisation of all qualitative and quantitative criteria to enable the Board to make its decisions. The final decision is the HAC Board's responsibility, and requires both expertise and a global view on issues.

For ex ante evaluation, two external experts are invited from the HAC's standing pool of experts to evaluate applications based on HAC criteria via the HAC's TIR database¹⁴, for which they receive an access code. A third evaluator may be invited if the first two are inconclusive. (For the procedure on the selection of experts, please see under Standard 2.4.) The evaluations are collated by an assigned programme officer and brought before the expert committee for the relevant discipline. This committee discusses the application and received expert evaluations in depth. Each application is assigned to a member of the disciplinary committee, who scrutinises it as a "third expert" and reports to the committee before it is discussed. The committee finally makes a recommendation to the Board, where the committee chair reports the case.

Similarly, initial (ex ante) accreditation of doctoral schools is conducted through the www.doktori.hu database¹⁵. Following the committee for the relevant discipline, the standing committee for university professorship and doctoral school applications also discusses the application in the same procedure described above, before passing its findings to the HAC Board for decision-making.

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

¹⁴<http://tir.mab.hu/>

¹⁵www.doktori.hu is maintained by the National Doctoral Council and linked with the HAC, which runs a closed domain for HAC evaluations



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

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

For the full range of tasks and activities, please refer to *Chapter 5* below.

Meeting documents are sent to HAC members a week before the plenary session. The documents are uploaded on the internal server to which Board members are granted secure remote access, and for reference by each Board member via meeting room laptops during the plenary meeting. Voting takes place electronically.

Financing

The HAC receives its annual budget as part of the annual budget of the Ministry of Human Capacities, which is responsible, among others, for education, in accordance with the Budget Law. The Government Decree 19/2012 determines that the HAC President has full discretion over the budget. In accordance with the legislation regulating public expenditure, the HAC has to submit an annual accounting report, which is approved by the Board of Financial Supervisors.

The table indicates the HAC's budget from 2013. The HAC's regular income stems from accreditations of new programmes, new doctoral schools and from evaluations of university professor applications.

Table 3: HAC budget 2013-November 2017

Year	State budget allocation in million HUF	State budget allocation in Euros	Own income in million HUF	Own income in Euros	Total in Euros	Expenditures in million HUF	Expenditures in EUR
2013	155	522 043,7	85,2	286 955,6	808 999,4	186,8	629 146,9
2014	155	492 235,4	62,6	198 799,6	691 035	214,5	681 190,3



Year	State budget allocation in million HUF	State budget allocation in Euros	Own income in million HUF	Own income in Euros	Total in Euros	Expenditures in million HUF	Expenditures in EUR
2015	155	495 017,9	73,8	235 692,4	730 710,3	234,8	749 872,3
2016	160 + 30	610 696,8	55	176 780,7	787 477,5	204,0	655 695,3
2017	160,6 + 20	578 892,0	39,7	126 613,0	705 505,0	165,7	531 131,8

The bulk of expenditures is on the fees of Board members (including the president) and the HAC staff. The total expenditure breakdown is 63.7% for personnel costs (wages and fees); 13.5% for social contributions; and 22.8% for material expenditures.

As regards expenditures for evaluations, institutional procedures comprise the largest amount. They range from between 1 to 2.5 million HUF (3 000 to 8 000 euros), depending on the size of the institution. The bulk of the cost are the fees of members of the site visit teams. The databased procedures are at minimal cost for the expert's fees, commonly 20 000 HUF (64 euros) per evaluation.

As can be seen in the table, there was a rise in the state budget of 35 million HUF in 2016. This was due to a one-time allocation negotiated by the new president for 2017 for furniture and IT investments and was received at the end of 2016. Negotiations are ongoing to build the increase into the regular allocation. A separate, earmarked income for the institutional evaluation procedures has been secured in the 2018 budget. Contrary to the situation five years ago, the HAC has sufficient and regularly transmitted funds for its operations at this time. In addition, the HAC received an additional amount of money for covering the cost of the external evaluation by ENQA and application to EQAR.

5. Higher education quality assurance activities of HAC

According to the Higher Education Act, the HAC's general task is to evaluate "educational, academic, research and artistic activities performed in higher education and the internal QA systems operated by HEIs, and the provision of expert services in the procedures related to HEIs".

Within this mandate, the HAC sees its foremost task, one which reinforces quality enhancement, to be the accreditation of HEIs in five-year cycles, done on request of the institution. However, many staff hours are devoted to ex ante programme evaluations, the ongoing review of doctoral schools and university professor applications. With institutional accreditation, the HAC accepts accreditation by an ENQA member agency or an agency listed in EQAR. There has been one such case, with the



German-language Andr ssy University in Budapest, which was evaluated by evalag and which evaluation the HAC accepted.

Within the scope of providing expert services requested by law, the HAC provides its opinion on request of the Minister or the Educational Authority.

Educational Authority requests: The Act and Government Decree 19/2012 regulate the services of the HAC to provide its expert opinion to the Educational Authority for the licensing of new HEIs; education and learning outcome framework requirements for programmes; new Bachelor and Master programmes; and new doctoral schools. These ex ante evaluations are conducted via the HAC “TIR” database. With applications for new Bachelor or Master programmes, an institution may submit the accreditation of an ENQA member agency rather than the HAC. No such procedures have been requested so far.

HEI or Minister requests: the HAC evaluates so-called education and learning outcome framework requirements, which are part of a two-step procedure in the quality evaluation for the initial licensing of new programmes. The framework requirements are issued as Ministerial decrees. Any new programme to be launched at institutions has either to fit into the existing framework or, if it does not, an institution has to apply for a new framework before submitting an accreditation request for the programme. The education and learning outcome requirements for VET, Bachelor and Master programmes were completely revised by the Ministry with appointed disciplinary expert committees in 2016. In the accreditation procedure on new programmes, the HAC evaluators check whether the requirements and conditions set down in the framework requirement are covered in the application.

The revised framework requirements focus much more than before 2016 on the attainment of competencies in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework, and sets down less rigid curriculum requirements. They have led to a change in focus in the HAC’s evaluation of the framework requirements and the linked initial programme accreditation applications, whereby institutions have to show and elaborate their programme designs along these lines, promoting a more qualitative judgment.

The framework requirements set down the name of the degree; the field; the length of studies; number of total ECTS credits and modules; the knowledge, competences, attitude, autonomy and responsibility to be attained in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework; and the entry requirements.

Applications for framework requirements and for initial new programme accreditation of VET programmes are submitted to HAC by the institution. Following their introduction *en masse* in 2012, when the HAC had to evaluate 230 applications, only six applications were submitted in 2016 and nine in 2017. Accreditation applications for doctoral schools are also submitted by HEIs. All of the evaluations in this category are conducted via the HAC TIR database, except doctoral schools, which are conducted via www.doktori.hu.

Minister requests: the ex post accreditation of clusters of Bachelor and Master programmes has been another major task of the HAC, which it conducted as part of its overall QA operation. The procedure covered all programmes taught in the country in a selected discipline on Bachelor and Master levels.



The outcome was the accreditation of each programme with recommendations for improvement and possible follow-up measures. It also included an in-depth thematic analysis of the state of the art and quality of the entire field and was issued in hardcopy as well as on the HAC website. Since 2013, following a change in the law, the HAC conducts this activity on request of the Minister.

Additionally, the Educational Authority is tasked with reviewing the license of an institution every five years, for which it conducts infrastructure capacity reviews and requests the HAC's opinion regarding quality, a practice that started in 2017. For this procedure, which is not linked to the HAC's institutional accreditation cycles, the HAC arrives at its opinion based on its existing documentation, e.g. previous evaluations and accreditations, new programme accreditations and whether they were supported by HAC or not, etc.

Another task, but one that does not fall under the ESG, are the evaluations of applications for professorial titles and positions for which HEIs or the Minister may request the HAC's opinion.

Table 4 presents the positive and negative decisions for each type of procedure conducted by the HAC.

Table 4: HAC decisions in 2015, 2016 and until November 2017

Type		Applications supported			Applications not supported		
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Ex ante accreditation of new institutions		0	0	0	0	0	0
Ex ante procedures for VET prog's	initial eval. of education and learning outcome requirements	0	6	9	0	0	0
	initial accreditation of VET programme	2	3	4	1	2	0
Ex ante procedures- Bachelor prog's	initial eval. of education and learning outcome requirements	1	0	3	0	0	0
	initial accreditation of Bachelor programmes	9	16	16	8	17	9



Type		Applications supported			Applications not supported		
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Ex-ante procedures - Master prog's	initial eval. of education and learning outcome requirements	2	1	4	2	1	2
	initial accreditation of Master programmes	25	15	11	21	19	16
	single-cycle Master programmes	14	10	4	5	8	7
Accreditation of doctoral schools	initial accreditation	2	0	3	3	1	2
	re-accreditation*	125	98	57	13	10	4
ex post institutional accreditation		14	11	1	1	2	5
accreditation of Bachelor / Master programmes in disciplinary clusters		38 / 14	115 / 90	0	1 / 0	15 / 6	0
opinion on applications for professor titles/positions		107	98	98	29	31	22

*The five-year accreditation of doctoral schools took place for the most part in 2014. The above figure refers to the interim biannual reviews.

All HAC processes involve an evaluation phase and a final decision by the HAC Board, but the HAC distinguishes between evaluation and accreditation from the perspective of the aftermath of the decision rather than the process as such. Initial evaluations of education and learning outcome framework requirements, though ending in a resolution just like accreditation decisions, are forwarded to the Ministry and are issued as national-level decrees. Accreditation decisions by HAC concern specific institutions or programmes at specific institutions.

The HAC has not provided evaluation services abroad, with the exception of off-site provision by Hungarian institutions. These concern predominantly Hungarian-language programmes for



Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries, and are evaluated as part of the given institutional accreditation process.

The HAC has had criteria and procedures in place for many years for accrediting foreign higher education institutions applying for operation in Hungary. Such an application had to go through an accreditation process, involving the HAC's relevant disciplinary committees reviewing the applicant institution's programmes. The HAC decision set down that the accreditation concerned a foreign institution and the degrees issued were foreign degrees. There were only very few such applications, since prior to the 2011 higher education law the Ministry did not involve the HAC in issuing licenses for foreign institutions. For this reason, the 22 foreign higher education institutions operating in Hungary are doing so under a license without any expiration date.

6. Processes and their methodologies

For each of the procedures described in this chapter, the HAC has dedicated criteria and guidelines, which are accessible via the HAC website¹⁶. The guidelines for each type of procedure encompass the relevant ESG. (For details, please see under Standard 2.1. below and in *Annex 1.*)

Programme officers are assigned expert committees whose work they prepare and assist from inception to completion of the report. They contact designated evaluators and assist in their external evaluation process. Each of them is responsible for several disciplinary and other committees and several institutions; they prepare and participate in site-visits and assist in writing/editing the accreditation report.

Programme officers check that incoming applications meet formal requirements, including that each criterion is provided with sufficient evidence to conduct the evaluation. They then provide evaluators with the criteria and guidelines together with the application and handle the process until its conclusion.

Ex ante procedures are conducted via the HAC TIR or www.doktori.hu databases, and the latter is used also for the periodic reviews of doctoral schools. Ex post procedures involve reports with follow-up procedures.

All procedures conclude with a decision by the HAC Board in the form of a resolution and a subsequent letter to the submitting institution or authority with the resolution and explanations for the decision or, for ex post procedures, a full report. The resolutions for ex ante procedures and the full reports for ex post procedures are accessible through the HAC website¹⁷.

¹⁶www.mab.hu, depending on the type of procedure under "Beadványok" and "Akkreditáció" on the Hungarian website, and criteria for some disciplinary fields on the English website under "Regulations, Procedures"

¹⁷An example in Hungarian of a resolution for an evaluated bachelor programme is at <http://web.mab.hu/tir/index.php?pid=803&pop=11711> and an institutional report is at http://mizar.mab.hu/web/images/tir/jelentesek/WSF_jelentesH.pdf



Ex ante initial evaluation and accreditation of VET, Bachelor, Master programmes

Applications for initial framework requirements for VET, Bachelor, Master programmes or a new programme to be launched at a HEI are conducted via the HAC TIR or doctoral databases, as noted earlier. The HAC by-laws and procedural guidelines set down the review process for each activity.

The process for applications for ex-ante evaluations proceeds as follows:

Submitted application registered → programme officer assigned → formal check by programme officer → chair(s) of respective HAC committee(s) for disciplines appoint(s) evaluators → evaluators formulate written opinion via TIR database → respective committee(s) discuss(es) the application, with reporting by the scrutinising committee member, and make(s) proposal for decision → HAC Board discusses, with reporting by head of disciplinary committee member, and makes final decision → programme officer prepares letter to the Educational Authority, institution or Minister → HAC president checks and signs letter → resolution published on HAC website.

External evaluators for initial evaluation and accreditation are selected from the HAC pool of evaluators by the chair of the expert committee for a discipline that deals with the application, or he or she may nominate new experts. In the majority of cases, two external evaluators are invited, but a third one may be invited if the evaluation is inconclusive.

The formal check of an incoming application by a designated programme officer includes ascertaining that the legal requirements for a programme are considered. The programme officer checks also that the applicant has responded to each criterion set down in the guidelines for the given procedure and that information and evidence is provided for all evaluation criteria for the type of application. The HAC Guidelines for Programme Officers sets down the procedure.

External evaluators receive the HAC criteria for the particular type of procedure, as well as evaluation guidelines in addition to getting access to the application. When they enter the database following their invitation, evaluators must acknowledge no-conflict-of interest and having read the ethical guidelines before proceeding with the evaluation.

Legal requirements checked by programme officer are set down in:

- a) Higher Education Act;
- b) The relevant government and Ministerial decrees specifying the programme structures and education and qualification framework requirements of each distinct degree program (ref. section 4.1), specifically their designation, credit ranges the competences, skills, curriculum, modules and their credits and assessment obligations.

Institutional accreditation

For the ex ante *initial accreditation of new HEIs*, the procedure followed by the programme officer is initially the same as for new programmes described in section 6.1, since new institutions have to



comply with the legal requirement, set down in Article 6 (2) of the Higher Education Act, that HEIs must carry at least four programmes¹⁸. Therefore, applications for new institutions must get accreditation for these new programmes in addition to institutional criteria. External evaluators for the field are invited to evaluate the programmes via the HAC TIR database, subsequently their evaluations are discussed in the relevant expert committees for disciplines together with the institutional part of the application. Two additional evaluators with leadership expertise are invited to scrutinise the institutional-level criteria. According to the HAC procedures, a site visit may be conducted. In actuality, as seen in *Table 4* above, there have not been procedures for new institutions in recent years.

In the ex post process, when *institutions are accredited in five-year cycles*, the accreditation procedure involves an extensive self-assessment report based on HAC guidelines, site visit, report and follow-up. The guidelines encompass all standards in Part 1 of the ESG in addition to one on research. External experts make up the so-called “site visit team”, which, according to HAC regulations, always includes a QA expert and a student. The programme officer accompanies the team. The chair of the site visit team is proposed to the HAC Board by the HAC president, and the chair proposes the members of the site visit team. All are approved by the HAC Board.

In the past, the HAC contacted an institution whose accreditation was expiring to initiate the institutional accreditation procedure. The new approach is to leave the responsibility for initiating their accreditation to the institutions, though HEIs are informed of the accreditation work plan in a transitional phase.

The process for institutional accreditation takes ten to 13 months and proceeds as follows:

Institution initiates procedure with HAC → programme officer assigned → programme officer sends guidelines and criteria for self-assessment report → HAC conducts briefing on self-assessment process for several institutions to undergo process → Institutions consult with programme officer during self-assessment process → HAC appoints site visit team → institution submits self-assessment report in TIR database and hardcopies → Submitted application registered → formal check by programme officer → self-assessment report forwarded to site visit team → site visit team briefing and 1-3-day site visit → team report → editing by programme officer and a dedicated staff member → site visit team chair approves report → report sent to institution for factual comments → HAC Board discusses report, chair of site visit team attends meeting → HAC Board passes final decision → programme officer prepares letter to institution → HAC president checks and signs letter → full evaluation report published in HAC website.

Site visit team members are chosen on a case-by-case basis and usually include one or several experienced site visit team members, especially as far as the chair is concerned. The visiting teams include between five and ten members total, depending on the size of the institution. The teams always include at least two academics, a quality assurance expert and a student. Additional expertise,

¹⁸Church maintained institutions require only one programme



such as persons from business or industry, may be included if the procedure requires it. The institution is asked to declare no-conflict-of-interest regarding the proposed site visit team members. The team writes an extensive report, which always includes recommendations and often a request for an action plan. The follow-up checking requested actions may or may not include a site visit.

Programme accreditation in disciplinary clusters

Accreditation of programmes in disciplinary clusters was introduced in 2004 and has since constituted the programmatic accreditation part of the HAC's ex post QA processes. The advantages have been that one pool of experts reviewed an entire field within a short span of time, since all Bachelor and Master programmes in the discipline were evaluated. The process usually took a year or more. The most recent and largest evaluation, completed in 2016, covered economics and business and encompassed 196 programmes at 31 institutions¹⁹. In all, eleven cluster procedures have been carried out, with medicine, dentistry and pharmacy evaluated twice.

The administrative process was basically the same as for institutional accreditation, but with a much larger pool of over 70 site visit team members in order to avoid conflict of interest. There was also an early preparatory meeting for the pool in order to ensure consistency of the procedure and interpretation of the criteria. The detailed procedural guidelines were issued based on feedback in the meeting. The length of the site-visit period extended over one or two months in total, although the visits to each programme site lasted only a day. In case of the business and economics cluster the team groups produced five separate reports that were combined into one comprehensive report. A workshop was organised at the end of the procedure to draw conclusions about the process.

Programme accreditation in disciplinary clusters is conducted on initiative of the Minister, as allowed by law.

Doctoral schools

There are currently some 190 doctoral schools. The periodic accreditation processes for doctoral schools are initiated by HAC. Periodic reviews are scheduled for 15 April and 30 September, by which deadlines institutions must upload the changes in their schools and programmes to the www.doktori.hu database, with special focus on their academic staff. With major changes, two evaluators for each involved discipline are invited to review whether the conditions persist to sustain the quality criteria.

The accreditation period of doctoral schools is a maximum of five years, after which the whole school is evaluated in a similar procedure as for the initial accreditation.

¹⁹An example in Hungarian of a report of the discipline of economics and business is at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/kiadvanyok/Jelentesek11_I.pdf for Vol. I and Vol. II at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/kiadvanyok/Jelentesek11_II.pdf. An English summary of the methodology for health sciences evaluation, completed in 2015, is at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/SimultAssMethodology.doc>



HAC informs doctoral school of impending evaluation → submitted application registered → doctoral school uploads application to doctoral database → dedicated programme officer for doctoral school applications conducts formal check → chair(s) of standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications nominates two evaluators for each discipline involved → evaluators formulate written opinion via doktori.hu database → respective expert committees for disciplines discuss(es) the application and make(s) proposal for decision → standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications discusses the application, accepts or amends disciplinary committee proposal and makes proposal for decision → HAC Board discusses and makes final decision → programme officer prepares letter to the institution → HAC president checks and signs letter → resolution published on HAC website.

The government has issued a revised regulation on doctoral education in 2016 in line with its higher education strategy that promotes the expansion in the quantity and quality of the next generation of scientists, including a new structure for PhD programmes (2+2 years and an additional examination). In the regular reviews of doctoral schools, the HAC checks if the new structure has been implemented. The ultimate success of the structure is to be explored in the future. The HAC has in the past and will continue to focus on the evaluation of doctoral schools with a view to the qualifications of their core teaching staff and PhD supervisors.

University professorial positions

According to Section 69 (1) of the Higher Education Act, a university rector must request the expert opinion of the HAC before appointing full professors. The HAC has developed a point system, by which it weighs and rates the applicant's various activities and qualifications. The HAC has begun to invite foreign experts for this procedure²⁰. The applications together with the HAC criteria and evaluation guidelines are provided to two external evaluators, except when the applicant already holds the title of Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, when only one external evaluator is invited²¹. The evaluators conduct their evaluations via the HAC TIR database. The relevant expert committee on a discipline and subsequently the standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications discuss the evaluations and the HAC Board passes a final decision, which the HAC sends to the institutions as well as the Ministry together with reasons for the decision.

The following table illustrates an overview of the types of evaluation and accreditation procedures and how they are handled by the HAC.

²⁰The procedures are translated into English and on the HAC website at http://www.mab.hu/web/tir/doc/utmut_et2_en.pdf.

²¹ The title is awarded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences based on extensive international research qualifications and publications



Table 5: HAC procedures by type of application

Type	submitted by	2 evaluators/ procedure	decision-making committees
Within scope of ESG			
1. initial accreditation of <u>new</u> HEIs (incl. initial programmes);	Educational Authority	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted + ad hoc commission for particular institution application → Board
2. initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of <u>VET</u> programmes	HEI	TIR***	VET commission***** → Board
3. initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of <u>Bachelor</u> programmes;	HEI or Minister	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → Board
4. initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of <u>Master</u> programmes;	HEI or Minister	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → Board
5. initial accreditation of <u>VET</u> programmes;	HEI	TIR***	VET commission***** → Board
6. initial accreditation of <u>Bachelor</u> programmes;	Educational Authority	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → Board
7. initial accreditation of <u>Master</u> programmes;	Educational Authority	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → Board
8. initial accreditation of new <u>doctoral schools</u> at universities;	Educational Authority	doktori.hu*****	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications → Board



Type	submitted by	2 evaluators/ procedure	decision-making committees
9. accreditation of <u>institutions in five-year cycles</u> ;	HEI	SAR, site visit by site visit team, site visit team report	Board directly
10. accreditation of Bachelor and Master programmes in <u>disciplinary clusters</u> and thematic review of discipline	Minister	SAR, visit by site visit team to all sites, site visit team report	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → Board
11. accreditation of <u>doctoral schools</u> in maximum five-year cycles**	HEI	doktori.hu	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications → Board
Outside scope of ESG			
12. opinion on applications for <u>professor titles/positions</u>	HEI	TIR***	discipline committees according to programmes submitted → standing committee on university professor and doctoral school applications → Board

*10: Minister requests evaluation and analysis of entire field, where all Bachelor/Master programmes are reviewed together

** Additional intermittent monitoring via doktori.hu of persistent quality of academic staff

***TIR: HAC database

****www.doktori.hu database developed by National Doctoral Council and HAC

*****VET commission to be discontinued due to few new applications, these to be discussed by the discipline committees after February 2018



7. Internal quality assurance of HAC

Mission and values

With the adoption of a strategy 2017-2018 at its plenary meeting on 9 December 2016, the HAC elaborated its quality policy, including its mission, extensively.²²

The main task of HAC is to evaluate and foster high level teaching and learning in Hungarian HEIs, and to deliver quality assurance that supports each level and each participant of higher education. During its operation, HAC considers the legislation on higher education, performs its dedicated tasks, complies with the criteria set in the ESG 2015, and applies the objective, complex and up-to-date criteria developed by the HAC expert commissions and Board. With its activities, HAC reinforces its independent operations, and applies, develops and/or adapts a methodology in evaluation in line with international standards. HAC expert activities, accreditation, analysis and decision-making are built on an objective criteria framework, all activities are independent, unbiased, non-political, and follow the principal values set out in international standards. HAC seeks to enhance the internal quality culture of HEIs with its activities, thus helping to improve the quality of Hungarian higher education and its international recognition.

The strategy goes on to describe the HAC's values:

- (1) *transparency*: HAC publishes its decisions and the principles its analyses are based on, discloses its resolutions and the criteria used in decision making and analysis;
- (2) *independence*: independent operation ensures the quality and recognition of the HAC's work, while institutional independence ensures the respect and support for the autonomy of HEIs;
- (3) *cooperation*: HAC regularly consults the stakeholders of higher education, cooperates with higher education representative organisations, partner organisations in quality assurance, and key international organisations;
- (4) *integrity*: during its operation, HAC acts in an irreproachable, just, fair, impartial, objective and professional way.

Processes

The HAC has a Standing Committee for Quality Assurance, which is responsible for developing strategic internal quality measures, conducting analyses of surveys and other related activities.

The HAC has revised its criteria for evaluation and accreditation in line with the ESG 2015. The criteria for institutional accreditation comprise all of ESG Part 1. The criteria for the other types of activities comprise the relevant standards.

²² Mission statement at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/publications/mission_statement.pdf



The HAC's internal QA is set down in a comprehensive set of documents. In addition to describing processes and responsibilities, it comprises the HAC's basic documents compiled into a folder, including the mission statement and values; the ESG; the Code of Ethics; the By-Laws (link); regulations on dealing with public documents; the HAC bodies, including the Board of Appeals, and their roles and tasks (links to By-Laws). The section on the Secretariat encompasses a detailed Programme Officers' Handbook. The internal QA documents are for internal use and are not published.

Internal quality processes are described (please see under ESG 3.6), including feedback from the HAC's advisory boards as well as external and internal stakeholders, with links to the relevant questionnaires. The final section deals with the HAC's external contacts and dissemination tasks.

As a rule, the HAC has been conducting surveys at the end of the year among HEIs and their site visit team members following the completion of an institutional accreditation procedure. The summary of the results was discussed each time in the HAC Board.

The HAC members also discussed each year the formal recommendations of the IAB and feedback from the meetings of the Hungarian Advisory Board, although the latter body was newly set up only in 2017 and the previous one met last in 2014. In addition to the external stakeholders on the HAC Board, this advisory body provides feedback from representatives of business and industry regarding the quality of higher education.

A SWOT analysis among HAC members and members of the staff was conducted for the external evaluation of the HAC in 2013 and again for the current evaluation. The results and follow-up actions were discussed internally and fed into the self-assessment reports.

With the conclusion of the third cycle of institutional accreditation in 2016, the HAC decided to conduct a survey about the work of the HAC in general among HEIs in spring 2017. It is the task of the Quality Assurance Standing Committee to review the feedback from the surveys and present the results to the HAC Board for discussion. This committee was newly established in 2017, and it has reviewed the feedback from the 2017 surveys and proposed actions for the HAC.

Finally, the staff meetings, where programme officers exchange information and experiences on current work, as well as the participation of HAC members and staff in international QA events contribute to benchmarking the HAC's internal QA.

8. International activities

HAC has been actively involved in the international developments of higher education quality since its establishment in 1993. A broader international participation remains an ongoing strategic goal. The international connection reflects on the HAC's adherence to international standards; its embeddedness in international QA and the observance of trends in the field; and the importance assigned to its international recognition, all of which advance the enhancement of Hungarian higher



education. From the beginning, HAC has had an IAB with recognised higher education and QA experts who have provided detailed extensive advice for the HAC and its work²³.

As concerns memberships in international organisations, the HAC has been a full member of ENQA since 2002. HAC has hosted two Members' Forums, most recently in April 2016, and a training seminar for ENQA experts in May 2013.

The HAC is also a long-standing member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and founding member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA, formerly CEE Network). The previous HAC secretary general was a board member in INQAAHE and a board member and vice-president of ENQA. The HAC's programme officer for foreign affairs has acted as secretary general of CEENQA for 16 years from its founding until 2017 and has served on the boards of the European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme and ENQA. She has worked for QA agencies in Germany and Austria and has been on the Board of AQ Austria for over five years. She was trained as an ENQA team review expert and has participated in some agency reviews prior to her board membership.

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

The HAC has not conducted evaluations or accreditation of institutions or programmes abroad, with the exception of off-site provision of programmes by Hungarian institutions intended predominantly for Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries. To do that, an extended staff with high level English proficiency, a renewed expert pool of reviewers with English as working language and expert training are needed. This aim is one of the many challenges HAC faces in a transitional time of modernisation.

²³The recommendations since 2003 are at http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en



9. Compliance with ESG Part 3

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Standard:

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

The main focus of HAC's work is a) the initial accreditation of new VET, Bachelor and Master programmes, including, in a separate step, the evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements, as well as the initial accreditation of doctoral schools; and b) institutional accreditation in five-year cycles and the ongoing review of doctoral schools. The HAC also conducts programme accreditation in the form of programme clusters in disciplinary groups at the request of the Minister, which is not done at regular intervals and has not covered all programmes in the country.

With the double QA approach of initial evaluation and accreditation and the cyclical accreditation of HEIs, the HAC fulfils its mission "to evaluate and foster high level learning in Hungarian HEIs, and to deliver QA that supports each level and each participant of higher education." Following the completion of the third institutional accreditation cycle in 2016 and various types of programme reviews over the years, the HAC finds that HEIs in Hungary have reached a degree of maturity where they must assume responsibility for their own quality. That, again, is in line with its mission, according to which the HAC "seeks to enhance the internal quality culture of HEIs with its activities". Institutional accreditation has entered its fourth cycle in 2017. Following the evaluation of the first five institutions by autumn 2017, the HAC reviews the procedure and considers the changes to be made. The Board decisions on the accreditation status of these HEIs will be followed by a deeper evaluation as the start of benchmarking not present in the HAC's long years' practice. The new criteria used for the ESG 2015 assessment were taken by the HEIs as a necessary step toward a better QA within the institution, however, the internalisation of the new approach is going to be a longer process. The new principles will only have an impact on the HEIs' QA if their attitude changes and they take on this responsibility. This hasn't changed too much since the second cycle of accreditation, that is, in the last decade, so that by introducing ESG 2015 assessment the HAC aims at having an impact on the HEIs' QA and this can be seen as added value to Hungarian higher education quality.

With regard to the criteria and procedures for the initial evaluation and accreditation of various levels of programmes, the HAC distinguishes between evaluation and accreditation. Initial evaluations of education and learning outcome framework requirements are expert opinions that are forwarded to the Ministry, which issues these requirements as national-level decrees. Applications for launching



new programmes at institutions are accredited by HAC based partly on the proposed programme's conformity with the outcome requirements, but here the details of the proposed provision are also evaluated.

As noted earlier, initial evaluation and accreditation procedures are conducted by external evaluators via the HAC's databases and do not include site visits. The evaluations are discussed in the relevant disciplinary committee and the HAC Board, whose yes/no decision describes the reasoning behind it. The HAC decisions on initial accreditation are published on its website.

The HAC mission statement, are available on its website, as are the criteria and guidelines for each of the different procedures.

Requests for recognising foreign accreditation have been rare, therefore the HAC has proceeded on a case by case basis before passing regulations in January 2018 (see under ESG 2.5).

The scarcity of external stakeholder involvement is a weakness of HAC in its current set-up, although a strong point is the Hungarian Advisory Board, currently comprising eight members from business and industry as well as two from research institutes. The delegating bodies to the Board itself are set into law, with one corporate representative. However, in its expert committees the HAC has room to decide their composition. The new institutional accreditation guidelines were developed by a team of external experts; they included academics with experience in internal and external QA nationally and internationally, as well as a practitioner of QA at a municipal government, and two students. Currently five of eight standing committees on disciplines include a student or PhD student (the student from the Art committee dropped out), and two have representatives from industry or employers. External stakeholders are also on the Quality Assurance Committee and the outgoing VET committee. It is evident that stakeholder involvement has increased in the more recent activities of the HAC. With the new Board after March 2018, the HAC should aim to increase the weight of external stakeholders in its organisation and work.

Documents:

- HAC strategy and mission statement at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/HAC_Strategy_2017.pdf
- HAC organisation and committees with stakeholders at www.mab.hu. The English site lists the committees, the Hungarian site lists also the members

3.2 Official status

Standard:

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

The HAC has been established with the country's first Higher Education Act in 1993 and continues as a legal entity with the responsibility for the external QA of Hungarian higher education. The most recent Higher Education Act CCIV of 2011 upholds the HAC's status as a "national expert body established for ... external evaluation ...".



The Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on higher education QA and enhancement defines the HAC's tasks in more detail. It stipulates, among others, that the HAC operates in accordance with the ESG and that it may not be directed in the performance of its activities or its financial management. HAC staff work in accordance with the national civil law. The various legislation governing the HAC and its activities is listed in Section 4.1.

The stakeholders of higher education in Hungary are well aware of the HAC's status and its procedures are followed even as they may change and adapt over time.

Documents:

- Higher Education Act of 2011, at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/hac/regulations/Nftv_angol_2Sept2016_EMMI%20forditas.pdf
- Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/szabalyok/MABrol_19_2012_Kormrend_160709.pdf

3.3 Independence

Standard:

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

The HAC is independent in its operations; it sets its criteria for quality evaluation as an autonomous expert body and takes quality decisions without the influence of external pressures. To safeguard its unconstrained decision-making on the internal level, the HAC has in place a Code of Ethics, which regulates ethical behaviour and conflicts of interest and applies to HAC Board members and external experts as well as HAC staff.

In the 2013 full review, ENQA found that the HAC was not fully independent due to the delegating structure that had been implemented with the then new, 2011 Higher Education Act. In the 2015 SAR to the partial review the HAC was able to report on the positive changes that had since occurred, based on which HAC received full membership status. These changes included that

- the HAC's independence is declared in the Higher Education Act, which had been removed with the new act and relegated to the government decree regulating HAC;
- the National Union of Students and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegate two additional members to the HAC Board thus changing the balance of members delegated by the Minister and increasing the representation of external stakeholders;
- the Government Decree (19/2012. (II. 22) regulating the HAC addresses the potential recall of a HAC Board member by the delegating body by requiring an explanation for such action.

In the current delegation process for the new HAC Board, who will come into office in March 2018, negotiations are taking place between the HAC president and the Ministry and other delegating organisations in order to obtain a balanced Board membership with respect to academic background, types of institutions represented, a better representation of non-academics, geographic spread and



a better gender balance. The HAC considers negotiations involving all parties critical for an independent and effective Board. A new Board with a better balance would help to fulfil the HAC's strategic goals and to provide a mid- and long-term strategy and coherent action plan. No HAC members have ever been recalled.

In retrospect, it appears that the restrictions in the 2011 law may have been due to legalistic considerations on the part of the law's composers, rather than any intent on the part of lawmakers to curb the HAC's independence in its quality judgements and procedures. The quickly executed legal changes in response to the HAC's complains would underline this. Nevertheless there has been no legal change regarding the liberty of the Minister to grant licenses following a negative HAC decision. However, the decisions leading to complaints were usually related to full professor appointments in spite of a negative decision by the HAC.

The operational independence of the HAC is set into law; the Minister has no authority to change any HAC decision. The HAC is the legal national body charged with evaluating the quality of higher education in Hungary, and these quality decisions are publically accessible on the HAC website. In the past two years or so, the divisions of authority have become more clearly defined between the Ministry/Educational Authority and the HAC. At the same time, the SWOT analysis shows that not all stakeholders perceive yet the change regarding the HAC's independence and its impact on the procedures, or the results of negotiations. Therefore, disseminating the HAC's mandate vis-à-vis the Educational Authority needs to be addressed. However, the HAC is not aware that licenses following a negative quality decision by HAC have been granted in 2017. There is an ongoing information exchange between the HAC and the Educational Authority in the area where the HAC supplies its expert opinion for licensing decisions.

HAC has been stressing its independence in its activities and decisions, e.g. it has established a menu item in 2014 on the Hungarian website for interested parties on the status of accreditation on the premise that accreditation is an independent QA decision, irrespective of licensing by authorities, and stakeholders have thus the opportunity to check the quality findings on programmes and institutions.

Legislation defines broadly that the HAC conducts external QA in higher education, and where it is to provide its expert quality opinion to the Educational Authority for its initial institutional and programme licensing or the cyclical review of institutional licenses. Within this framework, the HAC is functionally independent; it develops its own criteria and processes and decides on the procedures it deems necessary for external QA. The recent change to focus on institutional accreditation is a case in point.

The HAC by-laws are developed by HAC and are subsequently approved by the Minister for legal compliance only and published in the Ministry bulletin.

The HAC's by-laws regulate conflict of interest and set down that deliberations may not be influenced by any personal or official interest. The HAC's Code of Ethics clearly states that members and experts as well as staff act in their capacity as experts without influence from third parties. HAC Board members and external experts sign a no-conflict-of-interest statement when they are appointed.



Documents:

- Higher Education Act of 2011, at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/hac/regulations/Nftv_angol_2Sept2016_EMMI%20forditas.pdf
- Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/szabalyok/MABrol_19_2012_Kormrend_160709.pdf
- Code of Ethics (in English) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/ethics.doc>. The Hungarian version is slightly updated at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/110227kodexH.doc>
- Regulations of the Board of Appeals (in Hungarian) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/FvBugyrend130514H.doc>

3.4 Thematic analysis

Standard:

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

In late summer of 2017, the HAC set up a new Quality Assurance Committee. One of its tasks is to prepare analyses for and on the work of the HAC. They have conducted several analyses conducted for this self-evaluation report.

The HAC informs the public about its activities in a series of publications. These encompass

- The Accreditation Gazettes
- HAC Annual Reports
- Disciplinary programme accreditation reports
- Presentations
- Articles and papers
- Occasional publications.

Of these, the Accreditation Gazettes (in Hungarian), which are issued three times a year, inform the public about HAC events and decisions and provide a picture on the mechanisms of higher education QA. They are published on the HAC website and sent to HEIs on a prescription basis.

The HAC annual reports (in Hungarian) open with an overview of the HAC's work, the results achieved and difficulties encountered. They also comment on areas where improving specified activities are called for. The main body of the reports are compilations of the HAC's work, personal issues, types and numbers of applications discussed and positive and negative decisions passed, as well as specific events. The annual reports are also published on the website and sent to institutions on request.

As part of its QA dissemination activities, the HAC president and some staff have participated in national conferences, speaking about the HAC's activities, trends and outlook. E.G. the HAC president participated in a round-table discussion on "Academic Freedom in Hungary" at Central European University in Budapest, and together with the programme officer for foreign affairs, she gave a presentation at the same university titled "[Trends and Challenges in Hungarian Higher](#)



[Education Quality Assurance](#)". Hungarian and English presentations are available on the Hungarian and English websites, respectively.

Regular in-depth thematic analyses of the evaluated field are conducted for the disciplinary programme accreditation reports. While the gist of these quite extensive reports deals with the analyses, quality findings and recommendations of individual programmes, the introductory part reviews the field, its quality overall, and recommends directions for improvement that are useful for the involved programmes and institutions, the interested public as well as the HAC itself. The reports are issued in hardcopy and through the website. In addition, a large workshop concluded the cluster evaluation of business and economics programmes, where both HAC and the involved institutions were able to reflect on the process.

The annual report of the HAC president serves as an internal document for reflection on the work of the past year. In the past, the Secretary General produced a report in parallel, reviewing the work of the Secretariat. Both were discussed in the HAC Board meeting at the beginning of the following year. With the new role of the planned Secretary General his/her report will be on the work of the whole Secretariat including its head and on the working style and quality of the committees.

The meetings of the HAC's IAB are an annual time for reflection for the HAC on its work. The discussions in the meetings, where HAC Board members who wish to attend also participate together with the HAC president and some staff, are always revelatory. They are preceded by the HAC's annual reports prepared for these meetings that are in-depth and critical overviews of the HAC's work. They form the basis for this body's annual recommendations. These are responded to for the subsequent annual meeting with a report by HAC on actions taken. The recommendations are published on the HAC's website.

An important instrument for in-depth analysis of the HAC's work was the discussion around the HAC's Strategy 2017-2018. The published document reflects the current strengths and weaknesses and informs the HAC and the public about the goals and way forward. The HAC president and staff members have also given presentations at national events, where the HAC's activities were presented and analysed for a broad audience.

One of the tasks of the HAC's Quality Assurance Committee is to analyse the experiences from the 2017 pilot evaluations. The first committee meeting on the subject on 22 November 2017 discussed feedback from site visit team members and representatives from the evaluated institutions provided through questionnaires. They provided their experiences, opinions and recommendations on what to improve. The Quality Assurance Committee plans to summarise its conclusions based on the questionnaire replies, the institutional self-evaluation reports and the HAC site visit team reports in January 2018. The analysis will form the basis of the revised institutional accreditation guidebook and will also be published on the HAC website following its approval by the HAC Board on 28 February 2018. The HAC plans not to change this version of the guidebook and criteria for one-two years to ensure stability, transparency and comparability.



As a whole, these activities and reports provide occasions for the HAC to reflect on its work and on possible and/or necessary changes, in line with its strategic objectives. Some are presented to the public, others are part of the internal reflection process.

Documents:

- Annual Report 2016 (in Hungarian), at <http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/kiadvanyok/Evkonyv2016.pdf>
- Reports on the Quality of Hungarian Higher Education (in Hungarian). Vol. 1 on the evaluation of business and economics, 2016, at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/kiadvanyok/Jelentesek11_1.pdf
- Conference presentation on experiences regarding the disciplinary programme accreditation of business and economics programmes at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/eloadasok/TemesiJ_20160526.pdf and http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/eloadasok/BakacsiGy_20160526.pdf
- HAC presentations (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=204&Itemid=604&lang=hu
- HAC papers (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=203&Itemid=605&lang=hu
- Recommendations of the IAB 2017 at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szervezet/ntt_recommendations_2017.pdf
- The Strategy of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) 2017-2018 at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/HAC_Strategy_2017.pdf

3.5 Resources

Standard:

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

The HAC receives the bulk of its budget from the government on an annual basis. A ministry decree regulating administrative fees in official higher education procedures (12/2013 (II.12)) regulates that the HAC may request fees for new programme, new institution and university professor procedures. In the past five years that came to around 40% of total income on average and, of course, fluctuates from year to year. (For budget details, please see section 4.3. on Financing.)

The HAC has been hiring new staff in the past months in order to increase its human resource capacity and, with the retirement of pensioner staff, to build up a younger, well-trained team. (For details on staff, please see section 4.2.6.)

The HAC Secretariat has ample offices in a central location that is easily accessible for its stakeholders and Board. There is a plenary meeting room with laptops and electronic voting equipment, and facilities for smaller meetings. Most staff share spacious office space with three or four desks. IT hardware and software are updated regularly.



Looking back to the last two annually issued reports by the Board of Financial Supervisors, the finances of the HAC were found to be stable, financing from the state budget was consolidated by 2015. It commended the increase in the HAC budget in 2016, which allowed for an update in IT and furnishings and ensured that trained staff are retained. This report also noted that the 2016 one-time surplus fund should be allocated as part of the regular budget, an issue on which negotiations with the Ministry are ongoing at the time of this writing. The reports of the Financial Supervisors are on the HAC website under “Üvegzseb” (Glass pocket in English, referring to the transparency provided).

Prior to the 2013 external review of the HAC, a one-time drastic budget cut and unreliable budget transfers by the Ministry led to non-compliance with ESG 3.5. with respect to resources. By the 2015 partial review, the HAC found these concerns alleviated and HAC was deemed fully compliant with this standard. Indeed, the HAC continues to feel reassured that its finances allow it to perform its basic activities reliably.

At the same time, negotiations with the Ministry are ongoing at the time of this writing to raise the HAC’s budget in order to allow for additional staff. With the reorganisation of various activities, such as the decrease of cyclical programme evaluations, and the intent set down in the Strategy to offer various types of evaluations as services, the HAC needs to increase its staff but hopes at the same time to generate added income in the future. Additional fundamental activities, such as different thematic analyses and their dissemination, workshops and forums with institutions are planned, as is the employment of international experts. These will require additional funding.

Documents:

- Sections 4.3. and 4.2.6. of this report
- Report of the Board of Financial Supervisors 2016 (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/uvegzezb/170526FB_hatarozat.pdf

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard:

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

The HAC has had internal regulations for professional conduct and integrity since its establishment, when incoming Board members and new experts were informed of expectations of no-conflict-of-interest, objective judgment and integrity. A Code of Ethics has been issued in 2000. New HAC Board members and external experts sign no-conflict-of-interest statements and experts working through the HAC database TIR must acknowledge the same before being granted entry to the applications. Staff job descriptions include a no-disclosure clause.

The criteria and guidelines for all external QA procedures, which are an integral part of its quality activities package, are on the HAC website.



The HAC By-Laws set down the responsibilities and activities of all internal and external members and experts as well as staff. A ministry regulation describes the rules for handling public data.

The HAC has an internal QA folder, including a Handbook for Programme Officers, as described in Section 7.

The HAC has requested feedback annually until 2014/15 from institutions evaluated in that year and from the external site visit team members in these processes. The results of these surveys were published on the HAC website. After a year's hiatus due to internal governance problems and staff overload before the new president took office, in spring 2017 institutions were surveyed about the work of the HAC in general. To close the quality loop, the results of the feedbacks were always discussed in staff meetings and in the plenary meetings of the HAC Board and actions, such as changes in the HAC's procedures, were taken as a result. It should be noted, however, that informal feedback has also led to improvements and changes in procedures over the years. The surveys are described in more detail in Section 11 below.

Feedback and recommendations from the HAC's Hungarian and IABs constitute a key part of the internal QA system. The HAC follows-up on the annual recommendations of the IAB and reports these actions to them at the next meeting. A recurring recommendation of the HAC's IAB has been the need to ensure gender balance in the HAC Board. Given the delegating framework for Board members, this continues to be a weakness; there are two women among the 20 HAC members, one of them the president.

Documents:

- By-Laws (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/150130MAB_SZMSZ_H.doc
- Code of Ethics (in English) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/ethics.doc>. The Hungarian version is slightly updated at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/110227kodexH.doc>
- Criteria and guidelines (most in Hungarian) on the HAC website www.mab.hu
- Internal quality assurance documents folder (including Staff Handbook) (hardcopy)
- Survey feedback from Institutions on the HAC website (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=245&Itemid=570&lang=hu
- HAC Regulation on Fulfilling its Obligation to Publish Public Information (in Hungarian) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/Kozerdkozettetel2012.pdf>

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Standard:

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

There is no requirement set in law for the HAC to undergo external reviews. Nevertheless, the HAC has undergone cyclical review for ENQA membership since 2007/08 and its ENQA status is always mentioned in the new documents of the Educational Authority. In fact, in 2000 HAC was one of the



first QA agencies to request an external evaluation. The self-assessment and panel reports are published on the HAC website.

The reviews provide an important instrument for HAC for its own self-reflection. The self-assessment process involving a number of stakeholders allows for an overview of the past and reflections on strengths and weaknesses, while the panel reports uncover these or other strengths and weaknesses and provide direction for the way forward.

Documents:

- External reviews of HAC since 2000 at http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=225&Itemid=704&lang=en

10. Compliance with ESG Part 2

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

Standard:

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

The HAC's activities are described in Section 6. The ESG relevant activities encompass the following:

- initial (ex ante) accreditation of new institutions
- initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of VET programmes
- initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of Bachelor programmes;
- initial evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements of Master programmes;
- initial accreditation of VET programmes;
- initial accreditation of Bachelor programmes;
- initial accreditation of Master programmes;
- initial accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities;
- accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles;
- accreditation of Bachelor and Master programmes in disciplinary clusters and thematic review of discipline
- accreditation of doctoral schools in maximum five-year cycles

It is important to bear in mind that external QA conducted by the HAC is a package, of which the specific areas of evaluation are all a part. The criteria for institutional accreditation, conducted in five-year cycles, contain all ten standards of the ESG Part 1. Initial procedures for new institutions are coupled with initial programme accreditation, given that a HEI must carry at least four programmes (only one for church-maintained institutions). Five HEIs were accredited so far in the fourth cycle of institutional accreditation and with the ESG 2015 criteria. The evaluation extended also to scientific activities.



Initial accreditation of new institutions and institutional accreditation in five-year cycles is based on the Higher Education Act, which outlines the requirements for HEIs regarding staff, organisational structure, tangible and financial assets, and regulations. Of these, the HAC reviews the internal documents, the staff and infrastructure necessary for the planned educational programmes, and whether the QA system ensures their quality and sustainability. In the past ten years, no applications for a new HEI have been submitted. Five existing HEIs were accredited in 2017 under new regulations based on the ESG 2015, a procedure that will be refined in the coming months based on the feedback received. The focus here is in how far the institutions' internal QA systems are embedded in their daily operations and how these lead to ongoing quality enhancement. The aim of the HAC procedure is to highlight good practices and to identify weaknesses and areas to be developed. Within the five-year cycle, HEIs undergo follow-up evaluations on the implementation of recommendations and to track developments.

The procedure for the **evaluation of education and learning outcome framework requirements for VET, Bachelor and Master programmes** leads to amendments (i.e. updates) in two legal documents, the Ministerial decree on education and learning outcome framework requirements into which the new one is added, and the register of new higher education qualifications. The HAC contributes to this procedure as an expert body, whereby it examines if the learning outcomes described in the framework are in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework with respect to the knowledge, competences, attitude, and autonomy and responsibility. The HAC also considers whether the education and learning outcome framework requirements are comparable to similar programmes nationally and internationally and have the capacity to lead to high-quality study programmes. The framework requirements, the applications for which are submitted by HEIs, thus are based on ESG 1.2. The number of credits for the degree levels are reviewed, as are the number of credits in VET programmes that may count toward entry into Bachelor programmes and how a comprehensive practical training is integrated into the VET and Bachelor programmes. With framework requirements for Bachelor programmes, the HAC also checks that the proposed programme is different enough from similar programmes to warrant a separate framework requirement. In the case of Master requirements, the HAC evaluates what Bachelor programmes may count as incoming requirements and in which cases additional credits and in which subjects. The purpose for this part of the review is to ensure that students entering level 7 of the Hungarian Qualifications Framework are on a comparable level irrespective of a variety of Bachelor qualifications.

Regarding the **initial accreditation of VET, Bachelor and Master programmes**, the HAC may support the application, support it with conditions or pass a negative decision. The accreditation builds on education and learning outcome framework requirements. The application for a new programme must be approved by the institutional senate, which requires that the HEI considered the ESG Part 1. In particular, it must be part of the institutional internal QA system (1.1.), and must ensure ongoing monitoring and review of the programme (1.9.) and information management (1.7.) in accordance with institutional-level rules. In order to provide information on 1.3. and parts of 1.4. (admission is administered through a national system), the application must contain a detailed curriculum for the entire programme, listing the courses and ECTS, the type of course (theoretical, practical, etc.) and



their proportion to each other, the kinds and schedule of examinations (including credits for the thesis and elements of the closing exam), the semester in which a course must be taken or the course requirement for entry into another course. Course descriptions and required and suggested literature as well as the learning outcomes of the course are provided, as is the research background of the staff and research in which students may participate.

Teaching staff (1.5.) criteria are set as a minimum of full-time staff especially for the heads of the programme and the courses; the former must be an associate or full professor, the latter at least a PhD. The relative ratio of guest professors is set and academic fields of teaching staff must be relevant to the subject they are teaching.

Thus, programme evaluation and accreditation encompass the programme-specific standards, and re-accreditation builds on the criteria for initial accreditation, which in turn builds on the framework requirements for the same programme and level. The periodic accreditation of VET programmes has not been conducted so far and no decision has been made on whether to include these in the cluster procedures.

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

Doctoral schools must be accredited before they are granted license to operate. They are under ongoing review, with changes examined via the www.doktori.hu database every six months with a view to the qualifications of their core teaching staff and PhD supervisors. With roughly 190 doctoral schools currently running, this is a task that the HAC intends to review in the coming HAC Board. Doctoral schools undergo a full review every five years under a normal external evaluation procedure, including a self-evaluation process by the school.

The Higher Education Act and a government decree (387/2015 (XII.19.)) set down basic criteria for the initial accreditation of doctoral schools. The law determines the university senate has the right to establish a doctoral school and has to adhere to the relevant ESG. The government decree outlines the conditions for establishing a doctoral school, the academic staff requirements, the doctor's degree, and entrance conditions. The HAC accreditation criteria include those in the legislation. Doctoral schools can only be established in the branch of science in which the HEI teaches a Master programme. The HAC sets criteria for academic staff, including full-time staff, a minimum of full professors and relevant research achievements in the field of the school. The applicant has to have separate regulations and entrance requirements for doctoral schools. Doctoral students hold student status with the relevant rights and obligations.

The re-accreditation of doctoral schools may be granted for five years, but one and three-year accreditation has been given if improvements were necessary but could be expected to be eliminated by the deadline. The criteria are basically the same as for the accreditation of new doctoral schools.

Compatibility of the HAC criteria with the ESG-2015 provisions is shown in *Annex 1*:



Documents:

- www.mab.hu, depending on the type of procedure guidelines and criteria are under “Beadványok” and “Akkreditáció” on the Hungarian website, and criteria for some disciplinary fields on the English website under “Regulations, Procedures”

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

Standard:

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

The HAC has redesigned and refined its methodologies several times over the years. Most changes were minor and made in response to feedback from users, especially concerning the self-assessment guidelines. Major changes were conceptual ones implemented, e.g. following an institutional evaluation and accreditation cycle. Up until the mid-2000s institutional accreditation procedures involved also all programmes in one process. The workload was enormous and, although during the site visits programmes were selected based on guidelines, not all programmes could be scrutinised in equal depth. Then the separation between institutional and programme accreditation was introduced, whereby the programmes were evaluated in disciplinary clusters. With the end of the third institutional accreditation cycle, this process was redesigned, and became the focus of the HAC’s external evaluation. Programme accreditation in clusters is to be continued on request of the Minister. The reason for this recent change was again the large workload involved in the evaluation of an entire field, coupled with the fact that for the same reason not all disciplines had been evaluated, and the change in the HAC’s approach to external QA. The experience of HEIs in their own internal QA and the HAC’s decision to focus on promoting and assisting HEIs in promoting their responsibilities in this respect while, at the same time, wanting to reduce the workload of institutions in the external QA process, has led to the changed guidelines now in place. The incorporation of the new ESG was another motivating factor.

The working group that redesigned the institutional accreditation criteria in light of the ESG 2015 considered the following principles:

- Institutions are responsible for their services;
- They must consider the needs of students and respond to them;
- The ESG must support the development of quality culture at institutions.

In particular, the new HAC criteria should promote

- Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment;
- Academic research as an element of ongoing academic staff development;
- The recognition of prior learning, recognising the increasing significance of mobility;
- Transparency and consistency of procedures; and
- The operation of a structured QA systems at institutions.



A main consideration of the working group was that the new institutional procedure focuses on the whole institution and less on faculties. Moreover, both the institutions' self-evaluation and the external evaluation by the HAC must certify that the whole PDCA cycle in the institutions' internal QA is assured. Rather than extensive descriptions on institutional practices, these reports must provide facts and evidence coupled with their analyses and with facts on how the institution intervenes when weaknesses are identified, how it develops its QA and how it checks that these are successful. The HAC process is a distinctly separate one from that of the Educational Authority in that it does not ask for the same data, but the data is made available for the site visit teams.

The 2017 procedure was a pilot, for which two and two of the selected five institutions had similar profiles. Hence the two arts and sciences universities and the two agriculture institutions were evaluated by the same site visit team, respectively. The experiences from the procedures will be drawn in late 2017 and early 2018.

It is important to note that before the five institutions were asked to start their self-evaluations, the HAC asked them to contribute to the new guidelines and personal consultations took place with each institution. Their feedback was used in finalising the new guidebook and the interpretations of various standards could be clarified.

During the evaluation procedures, the HAC focused on the internal QA system of institutions in accordance with the ESG 2015, in addition to their scientific achievements, and on the developmental capacities of institutions and, as well as on the plans and actions taken in order to meet this end. Moreover, the HEIs' consideration of the needs of stakeholders is scrutinised. An experienced QA expert is part of all site visit teams.

Institutions have developed a variety of internal QA systems even though, seen historically, the early HAC evaluations have been a contributing factor to the internal institutional QA arrangements. HAC expects that its new, more light-touch approach will promote increased inventiveness as well as responsibility for QA at HEIs.

It is important to note that the HAC considers the initial new institutional accreditation process, which involves five institutions, as a pilot and the procedure is likely to be refined based on feedback from institutions and the site visit team.

A first analysis of the pilot procedure shows that

- The majority of HEIs was happy with the new ESG 2015 procedure
- They welcomed the changes in focus of the self-evaluation (evidence-based)
- The large institutions with many faculties are challenged by having to shift their focus on the common institutional level, which was reflected in the mosaic-like composition of their self-evaluation reports
- Institutional staff as well as the members of the site visit teams have to be trained more rigorously for the new, ESG 2015-type process



- The HAC programme officers need to be trained in order to better understand and support the new procedures
- In addition to enforcing the PDCA approach, the process has to focus more on uncovering good practices and areas for development at institutions. In some cases these were touched on only very generally in their self-evaluation reports
- Institutional leaders are not mindful enough of linking their institutional strategies with their quality assurance systems.

To accommodate various institutional profiles (college or university or university of applied sciences; institutional profile; programme level and profile; etc.), site visit team members are selected with relevant backgrounds and they evaluate the fulfilment of the criteria with the institutional profile in mind.

In addition to formal and informal feedback from institutions and site visit team members, external stakeholders (institutional, student, employer representatives) are involved in the review of criteria and processes in the various committees and the HAC Board where these are discussed. In its activities, the HAC involves various stakeholders on different levels. Five of eight standing committees on disciplines include a student or PhD student and two have representatives from industry or employers. The plan is to include a student in all disciplinary committees when the new Board sets them up in March. The most recent change in guidelines were those for institutional accreditation, which were developed by a team of external experts who included academics with experience in internal and external QA nationally and internationally, as well as a QA practitioner from local government, and two students. Prior to the start of the evaluation process, the HAC organised a workshop for the QA staff from institutions with some of the experts who worked out the guidelines and HAC and staff representatives.

Documents:

- www.mab.hu, depending on the type of procedure depending on the type of procedure guidelines and criteria are under “Beadványok” and “Akkreditáció” on the Hungarian website, and criteria for some disciplinary fields on the English website under “Regulations, Procedures”
- The new institutional self-assessment guidelines (in Hungarian) are at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/akkreditacio/Intakkr_onert_utmut_ESG_20170526H.pdf

2.3 Implementing processes

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;



- a consistent follow-up.

As noted, initial ex ante procedures (new institutions, education and learning outcome requirements, programmes) are conducted through the HAC database TIR or, with doctoral schools, www.doktori.hu. The HAC believes that organising site visits for each of these evaluations would not be cost-effective either for HAC or for the institution since the fundamental requirements can be evaluated based on the applications submitted. The plans for a new institution or programme set down in the application are scrutinised according to detailed criteria.

For each procedure, two expert evaluators are suggested by the relevant expert committee either from the existing pool of experts or are entered into the pool/database if they meet the pre-defined criteria. The evaluators are anonymous, only the expert committee chair and the assigned programme officer know the identity. The reason for anonymity is to ensure the objectivity of the expert. The received, anonymous evaluations are subsequently discussed in the expert committee and motioned on to the HAC Board for further discussion and decision.

Ex post institutional accreditation as well as programme evaluations in disciplinary clusters involve site visits. Site visit teams, which are approved by the HAC Board, include a QA expert and a student. Both institutions and the programmes involved in the cluster prepare extensive self-assessment reports, based on HAC guidelines, which include data and information on the institution or programme as well as SWOT analyses and analytical parts. Site visit teams conduct site visits, which take two to three days for institutions and one day for each of the programmes in the cluster. At the site visits, the teams interview the rector, deans, department and institute heads; with programme evaluations also the heads of the programmes; teaching staff; the persons responsible for designing and implementing QA; and students.

The team prepares an evaluation report, based on HAC guidelines and assisted by the assigned programme officer, who also participates in the site visit. For the reports on disciplinary clusters of programmes, the team prepares thematic analyses of the state of the art of the field and its quality, in addition to evaluating each programme at each site. The final draft report is sent to the rector of the evaluated institution for factual comment, and finally goes to the relevant expert committees and subsequently the HAC Board together with the rector's comment for a final resolution on the accreditation decision.

The HAC ensures that the quality loop is closed by means of recommendations and monitoring. Ex ante procedures lead either to the support of an institution or programme or not. All ex post evaluation reports include recommendations for improvement and may contain conditions to be met by a set deadline, usually one to two years. All institutions have to submit either an activity plan or a description on actions taken on the HAC's recommendations, and in some cases the HAC decides to conduct a site visit to check on them. Most often, the HAC follows up on these plans without site visits by discussing the submitted actions or action plans in its expert committees and the HAC Board, which approves the action plans.

Doctoral schools undergo extensive evaluations every five years. The procedure and criteria are similar to the ones for initial accreditation. Additionally, doctoral schools are reviewed twice a year.



The aim of the repeated scrutiny is to ensure that the top research level of HEIs is of consistent quality on the notion that that has an impact on the academic quality of the institution overall. Institutions upload to the www.doktori.hu database any changes that impact the composition of the academic staff and especially the head of the school and programme supervisors. The focus of these reviews is to ascertain that the conditions persist to sustain the quality criteria. The HAC's IAB has recommended in 2017 to discontinue this practice, which is in contrast to the HAC's aim to be supportive of quality enhancement and to acknowledge the responsibility of HEIs for their own quality. The discussion on this issue is for the new HAC Board after March 2018.

The HAC does not publish self-assessment reports but many institutions do.

Documents:

- For criteria and procedures: www.mab.hu, depending on the type of procedure under “Beadványok” and “Akkreditáció” on the Hungarian website, and criteria for some disciplinary fields on the English website under “Regulations, Procedures”
- Self-assessment reports in hardcopy
- Self-assessment report of the doctoral school of Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music (in Hungarian) at <http://zeneakademia.hu/documents/672647/1000992/DI-onertekeles.pdf/7b9a2bc1-04cf-41d1-a4fe-88c0939c6944>

2.4 Peer-review experts

Standard:

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

Peer reviewers are selected in two ways. For ex ante procedures, where no site visits are involved, the expert committee for the discipline or field relevant to the programme to be evaluated recommends evaluators with expertise in the area. These peers are often already part of the HAC pool, otherwise they are entered into the database. The criteria for such experts are recognised expertise in the field and experience in teaching at a HEI or professional experience, which is judged and approved by the HAC's standing disciplinary committee. If the invited evaluators come to contradictory conclusions, a third expert is invited to evaluate an application. Students are not involved in evaluations in ex ante procedures, but are involved on several levels of decision-making, from the expert committee to the HAC Board. Experts must declare no conflict of interest before being granted access to the application.

The HAC pool of evaluators has undergone a substantial review and update in the summer of 2017. The disciplinary committees were asked to weed out inactive experts and retain only those they believed to be valuable and efficient contributors.

There is no organised training for experts in ex ante procedures, where the experts are asked to make judgments based on their professional and academic expertise. Experts receive a letter of invitation, which contains the basic information on the process and focus of the evaluation. An assigned



programme officer is in contact with the evaluator to describe the procedure in detail, including the use of the database. The format of the online evaluation provides detailed information on what the evaluator should focus on and what information, importantly including evidence to substantiate his or her findings, is to be provided. Experts must acknowledge no-conflict-of-interest before being able to proceed with the online evaluation.

In the cyclical ex post evaluations, the chair of site visit teams is proposed by the president of the HAC and has to be approved by the Board. The list of site visit team members is also approved by the Board. The site visit teams always include a higher education QA expert and at least one student. The latter is recommended by the National Union of Students, which conducts QA training for students in their pool. The HAC strives to invite academic experts in institutional evaluation who have leadership experience at HEIs, and team chairs should have experience in HAC evaluations. With programme evaluations, expertise in the field is a prerequisite, but these site visit teams also include a QA expert and a student. The whole team is approved by the HAC Board.

Ex post procedures are preceded by a half-day training on the HAC's evaluation process, and team members' responsibilities, and there is an exchange of information about the impending evaluation. The training includes a discussion on the focus of the HAC criteria, the ESG and its elements, the evaluation procedure and the visiting team's responsibilities, an analysis of the self-evaluation report, issues to be clarified at the institution, materials to be submitted prior to the visit and at the site, and what presentations to ask of the institution on their operations.

Importantly, HAC strives to include experienced HAC evaluators in each team. Site visits are preceded by team briefings to discuss the schedule of the visit and division of labour. The HAC notes that the SWOT analysis for its current self-evaluation process reveals that stakeholders considered the training preparing for the new institutional evaluation process in 2017 as insufficient. Following the experiences drawn from this process that are to be compiled by the HAC's QA Committee in early 2018, the entire process must be reviewed and refined before the next institutional evaluations begin. Training on the new procedure for experts (and for the new HAC Board members) will be organised.

International experts have been involved in the HAC's evaluations in the past in areas where no local expert could be found or there was a conflict of interest in smaller fields. This was especially the case with religious programmes and institutions following regime change in the 1990s, when these were newly set up.

Recently, some experts for the evaluation of applications for university professors, a task that does not fall under the ESG, have been foreign and the criteria and guidelines were translated into English. All university professor applications must be submitted in English or – where relevant – in another foreign language. A next step, set down in the HAC Strategy, is to conduct the accreditation of doctoral schools with international experts.

There are two foreign-language universities in Hungary, Andrásy Egyetem (Andrásy Universität), whose language of teaching is German, and Közép-Európai Egyetem (KEE, Central European University), which teaches in English. The evaluations in the past years were conducted in the



respective languages but experts were Hungarian or Hungarians living abroad in order to facilitate use of the Hungarian-language criteria. International involvement has changed with the 2017 procedures for these two institutions. The accreditation of KEE is conducted with a team of foreign experts and HAC has recognised the accreditation of Andrásy Universität by the Germany QA agency evalag along internal regulations.

The HAC has been discussing the need to involve more international experts over the years, and the IAB has repeatedly recommended it. The SWOT analysis collected for this SAR mentioned the danger of inbreeding, especially among external experts due to a limited pool in a small country. The HAC Strategy 2017-2018 foresees the introduction of English as the language of evaluation procedures in English as soon as the necessary human resources (academics and staff) are attained. The primary challenge at this time is the English-language proficiency of HAC staff.

Another comment in the SWOT has been the need to involve more non-academics in the HAC evaluations. This parallels a 2017 recommendation of the HAC's IAB. The HAC considers this a challenge to be dealt with when the new HAC Board steps in in March 2018.

Documents:

- The selection of standing expert committees on disciplines is regulated in § 33, of site-visit teams in § 37 and of external experts in in § 43 of the HAC By-Laws, in Hungarian at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/150130MAB_SZMSZ_H.doc

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Standard:

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

The Higher Education Act stipulates that the HAC has to consider the ESG in its evaluations. Each of the eleven activities conducted by HAC and listed under Standard 2.1 have dedicated guidelines and criteria. At the same time, as noted in the discussion on the same standard, some activities build on a set of criteria for another procedure and they must be taken together:

- Initial accreditation of new institutions involves programme accreditation (since new institutions must have at least four programmes).
- Education and learning outcome framework requirements form the basis for initial accreditation of programmes, hence
- the criteria for the initial accreditation of programmes require evaluators to check against the framework criteria, in addition to those for the individual programme at the given site.
- With regard to programmes, the education and learning outcome requirements have to be developed under consideration of the National Qualification Framework and which evaluators are asked to verify in an application, constituting a measure of consistency between applications for similar programmes.



An important change in criteria have been the revised national-level education and learning outcome requirements for study programmes. They focus much more than the earlier ones on knowledge, skills, attitudes, autonomy and responsibility, in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework. The SWOT analysis for this self-evaluation process also noted that the revised requirements constitute an improvement. The HAC's evaluation of the framework requirements and the linked initial programme accreditation applications now focuses on how institutions show and elaborate their programme designs along these lines.

The guidelines for the different procedures contain instructions for evaluators on the information required, including reasons with evidence to be provided for their findings. Site visit team participants receive instructions in the training preceding the evaluation process. Programme officers, who have an overview of similar applications, play a gateway role in the evaluation process also in the sense that they ensure consistency of evaluation and accreditation outcomes. They check that all criteria are dealt with and that evidence supports the arguments and judgements.

Programme officers provide institutions or programmes with the set of criteria they are to use in their self-assessment, and evaluators with those they are to use in their evaluations, together with personal guidance. Moreover, all criteria are available on the HAC website.

Consistency of decisions is ensured via the hierarchical committee structure, where the expert committees have an overview of cases in related fields and the HAC Board exercises a global scrutiny. All final decisions are signed off by the HAC President.

The HAC has had criteria and procedures in place since 2011 (amended in 2015) concerning the accreditation of joint programmes. They are evaluated according to the criteria for Hungarian programmes whereby the programme content is considered as a whole, in addition to criteria for the cooperation agreement between the partners, the type of degree issued and the QA system of the programme. No legislation has yet been passed to ratify the *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, and the HAC has not yet adapted its procedures in this regard.

Regarding criteria for accepting foreign accreditation, a HAC resolution of January 2018 was passed by the Board. It concerns the recognition of accreditation by an ENQA member agency or one listed in EQAR or others outside the EEA. According to § 1 (2), "In the recognition procedure, the HAC recognizes the effective accreditation by a foreign organization that is a member of ENQA, listed in EQAR, or is recognized as a quality assurance organization in accordance with the laws of the given state outside the EEA, and the procedure under which the accreditation was granted is in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015, and on condition that the accreditation is valid and in effect". The HAC registers the validity of the accreditation until the deadline of the foreign accreditation.

Documents:

- For criteria and procedures: www.mab.hu, depending on the type of procedure under "Beadványok" and "Akkreditáció" on the Hungarian website, and criteria for some disciplinary fields on the English website under "Regulations, Procedures"



- The full set of education and learning outcome framework requirements (in Hungarian) are at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/szabalyok/KKKrendelet_18_2016_EMMI_170101.docx
- HAC accreditation criteria for foreign higher education institutions applying for operation in Hungary (in Hungarian) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/beadvanyok/120706kulfint-SzBSz2012H.pdf>
- Regulation for accrediting joint programmes (in Hungarian) at http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/beadvanyok/120706kozoskepzes-velem2012H_mod2015.doc
- HAC Regulation on its Recognition of Accreditation Issued by Another Entity for a Higher Education Institution or Programme at <http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/hac/regulations/HAC%20Regulation%20foreign%20accred%20Recognition.pdf>

2.6 Reporting

Standard:

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

Ex ante evaluations done through the HAC database result in evaluators' reports containing their judgments on the various criteria for the procedure together with the explanation to their conclusions. Following discussion in the relevant expert committee and the HAC Board, a resolution is passed. The Educational Authority, through which institutions submit their application, send the HAC resolutions, encompassing the HAC accreditation decision and the explanation, to the rector of the applicant institution. The resolution is also published on the HAC website.

Cyclical institutional accreditation and programme cluster accreditation result in extensive reports. Both are produced based on templates supplied by the HAC, which ensure that all criteria are responded to. The description of the context and the individual procedure and the list of site visit team members constitute integral parts of these reports. The site visit team is instructed to present evidence to support their findings, and recommendations are part of the reports. The final report contains a statement about the deadline for actions to be taken, when a follow-up evaluation will be conducted.

The chairs of site visit teams are responsible for collecting the parts of the report assigned to each member of the team and for the final report. Programme officers play a key role in editing evaluation reports, which extends to ensuring that all criteria are sufficiently dealt with and that evidence supports the team's conclusions. Another HAC staff member is responsible for checking the final draft for clarity and consistency. A future challenge faced by HAC is the meticulous training of the site visit teams, especially the chairs, who often overly rely on the program officers' to phrase the texts or parts of the reports.

Institutions receive the final draft of the report for factual comment prior to the HAC decision-making process.



Documents:

- An example in Hungarian of a resolution for an evaluated Bachelor programme is at <http://web.mab.hu/tir/index.php?pid=803&pop=11711>
- Two examples in Hungarian of institutional accreditation reports (a small and a large institutions) are at http://mizar.mab.hu/web/images/tir/jelentesek/WSF_jelentesH.pdf and at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/tir/jelentesek/SZIE_jelentesH_20180112.pdf respectively

2.7 Complaints and appeals

Standard:

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

Appeals constitute a formal process within the HAC. The Board of Appeals of the HAC consists of three members, who may not be HAC Board members for at least three years. In its operations, the Board follows regulations that set down the types of cases to be heard and the procedures, and which are published on the HAC website. It operates independently, and in the past five years the number of its cases that do not concern university professor applications has ranged from two to 20 cases a year.

All applicants whose procedures end in a HAC evaluation or accreditation decision are informed about the outcome in a letter, which includes information about the applicant's possibility to appeal. The formal process of lodging an appeal depends on the type of the initial application; if the Educational Authority forwarded it to the HAC, the appeal is lodged with the Authority and where it was submitted to the HAC directly, the appeal is submitted here.

The Board reviews the appeal against the same HAC standards and criteria, focusing on the grounds for appeal described by the applicant in the letter of appeal and the documentation used for the HAC decision. The Board may also decide to invite HAC members for a hearing in order to have more information about the background of decisions discussed. The decision may be twofold: either the Board grants the appeal and thus overturns the HAC's decision, or it retains the HAC's original decision. Between 2012 and 2016, the Board granted the appeal of non-university professor applications in 10, 0, 1, 5, and 7 cases out of 15, 3, 2, 11 and 20 respectively.

In addition to informing the applicant, decisions and the Board's explanation are published on the HAC website.

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



Documents:

- Regulations of the Board of Appeals (in Hungarian) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/szabalyok/FvBugyrend130514H.doc>
- Example of a Board of Appeals decision (in Hungarian) at <http://www.mab.hu/web/tir/hatarozatok/fvb-16-2017.pdf>

11. Information and opinions of stakeholders

The HAC has a range of external stakeholders. Most important are HEIs and their students. The HAC has organised various events intermittently for the purpose of exchanging information about its work. E.g. a larger workshop concluded the cluster evaluation of business and economics programmes, which allowed for both HAC and the involved institutions to reflect on the process. The outcome was a positive one for the institutions, since it allowed for a comprehensive overview of the entire field and served as a benchmarking exercise as much as a quality feedback.

The last annual survey conducted among HEIs and site visit team members who participated in the institutional accreditation that year was completed in early 2015. The results show that both groups were quite satisfied with the organisation of the site visit and the professionalism of the assigned programme officer. Over three quarters of institutional respondents were fully or rather satisfied with the self-assessment guidelines and methodology, although one comment in the open-ended questions would have liked more detailed instructions. Over half were fully satisfied and almost half rather satisfied with the thoroughness of the evaluation report and three quarters found it very useful. Among the weaknesses mentioned in the open-ended questions was the time pressure during the site visit, which has been a recurring comment in earlier years. Site visit team respondents' opinions were more diffuse than institutions', although still in the positive range, about the self-assessment report and the quality and quantity of data provided. The open-ended questions reflect a more critical outcome regarding the amount of data requested in the guidelines. The HAC has considered the opinions of its stakeholders when it revised its guidelines for the fourth cycle of institutional accreditation beginning in 2017. The current set of criteria are based fully on the standards of the ESG Part 1, with the addition of a question on research, which is in line with the HAC's legal mandate.

The HAC conducted a survey among HEIs in spring 2017 to ask them about their observations on the work of the HAC in general. The responses regarding the role and importance of the HAC spread rather evenly between fully, mostly and partly satisfactory. A key question was in how far the HAC contributed to the institution's internal QA, where 44.44% responded with "mostly". It is a strategic goal of the HAC to raise its support to institutions in this area. Another question on the adequacy of support by the HAC secretariat was on the positive side with regard to assistance provided. However, 40.74% of respondents were not fully satisfied with the professional consultation and number of forums for institutions. Again, it is a strategic goal of HAC to hold forums on various topics in the coming years. A question regarding the importance of involving foreign experts in the HAC's



evaluations shows that about two thirds of respondents supports the idea. This coincides with the HAC's strategic plans.

The detailed analysis of the results of institutional survey the HAC conducted in spring 2017 will be discussed in the HAC's Quality Assurance Committee at its December 2017 meeting. The initial results were included in the SWOT analysis for this SAR. The final analysis will appear on the HAC website.

With the new institutional accreditation procedures, the HAC started to use surveys for students at the evaluated institutions. While these focus not on the work of the HAC but the students' institution, they are another tool in the HAC's procedures that involve stakeholder interaction.

Permanent HAC stakeholders include the Ministry of Human Capacities, the Hungarian Rector's Conference, the Hungarian Doctoral Council, the Higher Education and Scientific Council, the Association of Hungarian PhD Students, the National Union of Students in Hungary. Delegates from the latter two organisations are on the HAC Board, while the previous bodies are permanently invited to the public part of the HAC plenary meetings (where no applications or personal issues are discussed) and provide feedback on specific issues there.

At its first meeting the new Hungarian Advisory Board, members discussed the HAC's adjustments in light of the ESG 2015 and a change in focus towards more output criteria in the HAC's evaluations.

Last but by fan not least, an important source of feedback about the work of the HAC is by the IAB. Their recommendations following the annual meeting are discussed in the HAC Board. Recurring recommendations in the last years have been to use the window of opportunity when the third institutional accreditation cycle was finished to rethink its QA strategy in light of its human resources, the degree of maturity of institutions' internal QA systems, and the HAC's strategic goals. Another recurring concern has been the HAC's skewed gender balance. Both topics are addressed in the HAC Strategy 2017-2018.

12. Recommendations and main findings from previous review and resulting follow-up

The previous full external ENQA review of HAC took place in 2013. In a letter dated 14 January 2014, ENQA informed the HAC that "Board came to the conclusion that, while the other criteria can be deemed as satisfactorily met, the level of compliance of criterion 3 (resources) and 5 (independence) is significantly lower." The letter further states that "HAC will thus be designated as 'ENQA Full member under review' for a period of two years from the 29th November 2013 and will need to undergo a new review process at the end of this period." HAC underwent a partial review focusing on the two standards in spring 2015, which led to HAC regaining full membership on 6 May 2015, valid until 19 September 2018.

The following section presents the ENQA panels' judgments and recommendations in the 2013 review report, with the 2015 recommendations added for ESG 3 and 5, and the actions HAC has taken since



that time. The numbering follows the original reports, pertaining to the ESG 2005 and Part 2 precedes Part 3 as in those reports.

2.1. Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures within HEIs

Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

2.2. Development of External Quality Assurance Processes

Fully compliant

Recommendations:

External stakeholders should be more involved and trained for these processes, also foreign experts, as much as possible. This would contribute to a broader recognition of HAC processes by the society at larger and to more transparency.

External stakeholders are involved in the development of HAC processes in the following ways:

- Members of the HAC Board, where the final decision on the criteria and procedures is passed, include
 - a delegate of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK)
 - the president of the National Union of Students (HÖOK)
 - the president of the National Union of Doctoral Students (DOSZ).
- The committee that designed the new institutional accreditation criteria with the ESG 2015 included
 - an expert in quality assurance process design in regional government administration
 - a student with quality assurance experience, delegated by HÖOK
 - a PhD student with quality assurance experience, delegated by DOSZ
- The committee that evaluates and designed the criteria for VET programmes includes a representative from industry
- The Hungarian Advisory Board of HAC has three members (one representing a foreign entrepreneur) representing industry.

External QA of HAC relies on surveys conducted each year up until 2015 and again in 2017 among evaluated institutions and programmes in disciplinary clusters as well as their site visit team members included feedback on the HAC's guidelines and criteria, and results were used to revise them where needed.

Foreign experts have been involved in only a few evaluations, not in the development of processes. This should be improved.



2.3. Criteria for decisions

Fully compliant

Recommendations:

Further HAC clarifies, in negotiation with the Ministry, the distribution of tasks and the adequate timetable and resources required for the new VET programmes procedure, in order to ensure its credibility and sustainability. Both HAC and the Educational Authority should do their utmost to avoid similar situations in the future.

In improving this new QA procedure, HAC should pay a special attention to the European VET tools and programmes, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) and sectoral approaches.

The recommendation referred to the introduction by the Ministry of a number of VET programmes that the HAC had evaluated negatively. This was at the time when VET programmes in higher education were first introduced and the HAC had to evaluate over two hundred applications for the education and learning outcome framework requirements in a few months. Following the ENQA report, there were extended discussions with the Ministry, who explained that the particular programmes were necessary. Only one application for the education and learning outcome framework requirements of a VET programme has been submitted for accreditation since that time, which the HAC evaluated positively. The three applications for new VET programmes to be launched at institutions that the HAC did not accredit have not appeared in the Educational Catalogue and are thus not offered. Since 2016, the number of VET applications decreased immensely, so that the HAC Board decided to have the evaluations performed by the HAC's disciplinary committees.

2.4. Processes fit for purpose

Fully compliant

Recommendations:

The level of training and provision of resources for the experts involved in ex ante accreditation procedures should be amplified. The time allowed for site visits could be longer, depending on HAC funding, for the institutional accreditation, for covering the entire HEIs to be visited.

The participation of students in all processes, including having voting rights in the HAC Plenary, must be especially considered.

However the Panel noted as quite unusual in the EHEA that the status of student means automatically to be a member of National Union of Students in Hungary and that the students cannot independently make unions.

The Panel believes that the orientations of the 2008 ENQA Review to move towards an institutional, ex-post approach to quality, also emphasized by the IAB, should still be considered by HAC as an objective. The HAC has to consider how it can best keep and assert its leading role in quality assurance of higher education, in the context of the New Higher Education Act, in cooperation with all the other bodies and stakeholders.



Experts involved in ex ante procedures conduct their evaluation via the HAC TIR database or the www.doktori.hu database for doctoral schools according to the guidelines and using the format supplied by HAC. In these procedures, the experts' professional and academic expertise are important. The programme officer in charge of the application discusses the work with the evaluator and the invitation letter contains information on the procedure and considerations. Experts must acknowledge no-conflict-of-interest before proceeding with the online evaluation. As concerns the training of experts in ex ante procedures, the HAC has not considered any additional training since 2015 beyond the current method described.

By law, a student (recently the elected president of the National Union of Students) is now a full member of HAC and as such has voting rights. Five of eight expert committees for the disciplines, which discuss all applications, include a student (National Union of Students) or a PhD student (National Union of Doctoral Students) from the relevant field.

The HAC has no jurisdiction over the National Union of Students and on the National Union of Doctoral Students, but they are the officially recognised student bodies.

The HAC Strategy 2017-2018 describes the focus of the HAC on institutional accreditation and the HAC's service role in supporting HEIs' internal quality development as well as the better involvement of all stakeholders in the QA activities. This change, however, is slow and accompanied by debates that HAC needs to learn from.

2.5. Reporting

Fully compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that HAC ensures full communication of reports to all stakeholders and clearly addresses their specific information interests. Also, the Panel strongly recommends that HAC uses clearer signposts to its Web English version.

Transparency through coherent and reliable information of the public and the students requires that HAC's decisions should be included also in the Educational Catalogue.

The HAC has introduced a new section on its Hungarian website following the 2013 review for stakeholders ("*Érdeklődőknek*") that contains general information about the role of accreditation and where to find criteria, etc. on the website. A new website with a better structure, content and information update for all stakeholders and for further increasing transparency as well as the establishment of a more informative English website is planned for 2018. The fulfilment of all this goal depends on how successful HAC will be in hiring IT experts and designers (recently Hungary suffers from a serious lack of available employees).

The HAC has discussed the need for inclusion of the accreditation status in the Educational Catalogue, the typical access point for students applying to HEIs, which is administered by the Educational Authority. For the recent educational year (2017/2018) the cause for not fulfilling HAC's request was a software problem needing a redesign that requires resources. However, HAC published the full list



of accredited programs, and the Education Authority agreed on providing a link to the HAC's website. Now HAC is negotiating on this issue again and hopes that promises by the Educational Authority will be kept. HAC, independent of this, will further work on reaching and informing as many students as possible.

2.6. Follow-up procedures

Substantially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that HAC addresses the problem of systemic risk, above mentioned, together with the Ministry, the Educational Authority the National Conference of Rectors and the National Doctoral Council.

The ENQA panel referred to the accreditation procedures forwarded from the institutions through the Educational Authority, rather than receiving them directly from the institutions. The panel assumed that applicants would not take follow-up measures seriously for this reason.

In fact, the HAC has follow-up procedures in all its ex post processes and enforces the requests and recommendations. Institutions and programmes are requested to submit action plans by a set deadline, where they describe how they remedy weaknesses. The follow-up procedures may include a site visit.

2.7. Periodic reviews

Substantially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends HAC to address the issue of coherence between resources and tasks with the Educational Authority in order to implement the required cycles for all institutions and programmes to be reviewed.

HEIs are evaluated in five-year cycles, and accreditation deadlines are adhered to in the HAC's projected accreditation plan. The extension of deadlines for short periods that was employed for lack of resources is no longer prevalent. In the near future, the HAC plans to make it the responsibility of institutions to apply for accreditation when they near the deadline, rather than initiating the process itself. Due to successful negotiations, a new government decree will assign this tasks to the HEI, which has to apply for QA evaluation and cover the review costs.

Ex post accreditation of programmes is done in disciplinary clusters. This procedure was originally conducted on HAC initiative not on a regular basis and has not covered all disciplines. Following the coming into force of the new Higher Education Act, it is the Minister who requests disciplinary programme accreditation, with the first one launched in November 2013 for medical fields (which is the reason that the health sciences have been evaluated twice) and subsequently business and economics. In the future, HAC will conduct such procedures if requested by the Minister and paid by Ministry in accordance with the law.



2.8. System-wide analysis

Substantially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that HAC maintains a sufficient level of system-wide analysis, in order to improve cooperation with Educational Authority and other stakeholders.

Based on its good current expertise of the situation for all study fields and programmes, in accordance with the strategic policies of economic development of Hungary, system wide analysis would help to emphasize the key role, present importance and future potential of HAC activity for the progress of the higher education system in Hungary and for the country's development.

The HAC has focused its recurring system-wide – thematic – analysis on disciplinary fields. Cluster evaluation reports contained extensive analysis of the field evaluated, with recommendations for improvement. Other activities are listed under ESG 3.4. Moreover, the new higher education strategy of Hungary gives free room for this process. However, all strategic policies to be evaluated and the new thematic analysis performed would require the recruitment of further resources, human and financial, as well as a more engaged Board and better trained staff. This, up to now has not been successful and exceeded the HAC's capacity and organisational capacity.

3.1. Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education

Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

3.2. Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education

Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

3.3. Official status

Substantially compliant

Recommendations: none, but observation in the Analysis:

The independence of HAC is no longer formally mentioned in the Law, There remains a lack of clarity in the distribution of competences between HAC and the Educational Authority regarding the articulation of licensing and accreditation.

An amendment to the law that went into effect on 13 July 2013 declares that the HAC is “an independent national body of experts”.

Ongoing discussions between the HAC and the Educational Authority have clarified the respective distribution of competences, although implicitly there was a common understanding between the distribution of tasks already in 2013. The Educational Authority is charged with licensing new



provision and reviewing licenses of institutions every five years. HAC is the national-level expert body for external quality evaluation and accreditation, and publishes its quality findings on its website as an outcome of all its procedures. As a result of a year-long negotiation, the competences of HAC and the Educational Authority are clear and included in by-laws. Licensing and accreditation are still not linked, in spite of HAC's repeated attempts at achieving it.

3.4. Resources

2013: Partially compliant

Recommendations:

The coherence between allocated resources and tasks should be negotiated with the Educational Authority. The Ministry has to budget and provide HAC with the necessary resources in due time in order to allow the Agency to plan and carry out its tasks.

2015: Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

Since the 2013 ENQA review, when the HAC was in a precarious position with the loss of confidence in the HAC's effectiveness on the part of the government and its support was cut drastically, the HAC president at the time conducted negotiations with the Ministry and the HAC's status was restored. The budget was raised to a feasible level and has remained stable. The current HAC president, in office since September 2016, has raised the budget further (20% in 2016, used for the first half of 2017, and a further 14% in 2017) and is counting on stable annual funding.

ESG 3.5 Mission Statement

Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

3.6. Independence

2013: Partially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends HAC to persist in the present discussions with the Educational Authority about amendments and a clarification of the links and distribution of competences between Ministry of Human Resources – Educational Authority and HAC. It is important to ensure the independent status of HAC and to increase its stability and sustainability.

2015: Substantially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends HAC to persist in the present discussions with the Ministry of Human Resources and the Educational Authority about amendments and a clarification of the links and distribution of competences



between MHR-EA and HAC in order to increase its stability and sustainability. Improved clarity in definitions needs to be agreed and published.

Please see under ESG 3.3. above. It is important to add that while the Ministry delegates nine HAC members, it does so in consultation with higher education stakeholders. It does not influence the nomination of other delegating bodies. The HAC believes that it has a clear status guaranteed by the Higher Education Act and a recognised mission within Hungarian higher education. HAC operates and makes quality judgements independently of any government interference.

3.7. External Quality Assurance Criteria and Processes used by Agency

Substantially compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel considers that the participation of foreign experts and of external stakeholders might help in consolidating the Agency. Panel recommends HAC to involve foreign experts even when the financial resources of the Agency are limited.

The representation of students should also be increased. Their present representation only by a representative of the doctoral students is not sufficient, since they are usually considered in the EHEA as young researchers as much as students. The Panel recommends the designation of a representative of students, in addition to the representative of doctoral students. The students must be stakeholders with full rights to participate at HAC activities and decisions.

The Panel considers that it should be made much more explicit to all stakeholders what are and what are not the responsibilities of the Board of Appeals and its position vis-a-vis the Educational Authority and Ministry of Human Resources.

The question of inviting more foreign experts to participate in HAC evaluations has been on the table for years. The involvement of foreign evaluators for applications for professor titles and appointments has been introduced on the premise that the international standard of academic staff is a key component of higher education quality, and the evaluation guidelines and criteria have been translated into English. The HAC Strategy 2017-2018 foresees the involvement of more foreign experts, especially in the evaluation of doctoral schools within a two-year timeframe.

As noted under 2.4. above, one student (elected president of HÖÖK) is now a full member of the HAC Board and five of eight expert committees for the disciplines, discussing all applications, include a student or PhD Student from the relevant field. Students participate in all site visits.

Applicants are informed of their right to appeal in the decision letter. In procedures where the HAC provides its expert opinion for the Educational Authority or Minister, the appeal may be lodged there and is forwarded to the HAC's Board of Appeals. In procedures where applications are submitted directly to the HAC, the HAC's letter informs them along with the decision that they may lodge an appeal directly with the Board of Appeals.



3.8. Accountability procedures

Fully compliant

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that HAC considers the results of the annual surveys from all types of stakeholders, for each year, for the elaboration of a system wide analysis over HAC activity, over a period of 5 years, until the next mandatory external review.

For the following external review of agency, in 2018, HAC should prepare an aggregated system-wide analysis reporting not only the dynamics and changes in opinions of stakeholders, but also the impact of its own activity on the development of higher education in Hungary in accordance with the economic situation of the country.

The HAC has not been able to follow up on this recommendation. The transient state of the HAC in the past two-three years has constrained the HAC's human resources to the main activities described in this self-evaluation report.

ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgments, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims

Fully compliant

Recommendations: none

13. SWOT

This SWOT analysis aims first of all to support strategic processes. The HAC Strategy concludes by stating, "The 2017-2018 Strategy of the HAC should emphasize and reinforce the long-term objectives that are to serve as a foundation for our next strategy to be developed in 2018." The information should also be useful for the new HAC Board who come into office in spring 2018.

The SWOT analysis incorporates the replies of HAC Board members, the HAC Board of Appeals, and the members of the Secretariat. The compilation of respondents extends to repeated observations rather than singular individual perceptions. The summary below also reflects on the replies to questionnaires from HEI representatives conducted in spring 2017. The HEI questionnaires addressed general questions related to the HAC's operations.

The replies were summarised by the Quality Assurance Standing Committee.

Strengths include the professional recognition of the HAC and the experience and dedication of persons participating in the processes, including HAC staff. Distinct strategic aims were set down following the change in presidents. There is a general sense that the HAC's operations are transparent and recognise the value in publically accessible HAC decisions. Many respondents appreciate the supportive attitude of the HAC. Some respondents point out the recognition of HAC within the sector owing to its decades of experience. Also positive are the HAC's international embeddedness, its being ready to undergo regular external reviews.



One recurring **weakness** is the use of national experts who in some fields are from a too narrow pool, and some respondents question their objectivity. Along these lines, some HAC expert committees are, for one, not chaired with enough discipline and, for another, marked by inbreeding, which stands in the way of continual development and renewal. This could not be changed via drawing the committee chairs' attention to the negative impacts and the importance of using a better pool of experts. The quick introduction of the new ESG 2015 procedures without adequate preparation and consultation is mentioned. The criticism that the HAC focuses on formal criteria is still valid for some processes that have not yet been revised similar to that of the institutional accreditation approach. A criticism voiced concerned the variety of professional experiences and ages as well as established work methods of the staff, deemed professionally unstable, likely due to the large turn-over in the past year.

Opportunities encompass the positive reaction of the HAC in face of internal and external challenges, such as the ESG 2015, the improved education and learning outcome framework requirements, the new HAC leadership and renewal of the staff. Important among the opportunities are the invitation of foreign experts as well as more experts from business and industry. Another group of responses mentioned here the strengthening of the role of the HAC as a service organisation that disseminates good practice, the organisation of conferences, and the enhancement of the website.

Threats include inconsistency and lack of transparency in the mandate of the HAC in relation to the Educational Authority. The HAC has worked on separating the tasks it performs when it provides quality opinions to processes conducted by the Educational Authority and its own evaluation and accreditation decisions, but acknowledges that there is much work to do in reinforcing its mandate in the public mind. Providing an opinion to the Educational Authority on sometimes short deadlines has left some respondents feeling that quality evaluation is done in haste. Some respondents see partiality on the part of some experts toward their own institution or field of expertise, something the HAC continues to try to overcome, e.g. with the updating of its expert pool.

The compiled HAC SWOT analysis is in *Annex 2*.

14. Current challenges and areas for future development

The immediate challenge for the HAC is to set up a new Board with committed members, and together to develop a strategy for their six-year term that is rooted in the Strategy 2017-2018. Not all activities foreseen in the Action Plan 2017-2018 have been implemented and that needs to be done, with likely adjustments in line with an upcoming new strategy. The IAB mentioned at its 10 November 2017 meeting the importance of ensuring the smooth transition to the new HAC Board.

A primary objective is to proactively raise awareness of the HAC's activities and the concept of quality culture in the higher education sector as a whole. That involves communication in the form of workshops, forums and the media on various QA matters, as well as channelling resources toward more thematic analyses whose results should also be disseminated broadly. Better communication is needed, with respect to the HAC's evaluation and accreditation decisions in order to reinforce in the



public mind that the HAC's QA judgments are quality labels and independent of the Ministry or Educational Authority's licensing decisions. Along with that, the HAC must provide feedback to legislators on legal inconsistencies to be eliminated. It must be noted, however, that the Ministry has corrected some legislation (e.g. relating to doctoral schools) on behest of the HAC.

The new approach to institutional accreditation, as part of the HAC's new concept of external QA must be communicated to all stakeholders. The IAB suggested specifically increasing communication with HEIs, students and other stakeholders in order to enhance clarity and transparency in procedures and to build up awareness of the HAC's service function in QA.

The IAB included among its Recommendations that the HAC should reconsider its evaluation approach of doctoral schools, that is, to limit external evaluation to the full five-year process and eliminating the semi-annual formalistic reviews, and thus recognising also in this matter the responsibility for HEIs for their internal quality.

The new HAC Board and the its external experts have to be trained more thoroughly than has been done with the pilot procedure, in response to replies in the SWOT analysis, noted by the International Board, and foreseen also by HAC.

Equally as important – and perhaps the greatest challenge in the Hungarian context – is the involvement of more foreign experts in the HAC's processes. This has been a recurring recommendation of the HAC's IAB, was one of the strongest criticisms among the SWOT replies, and is set down in the Strategy 2017-2018.



15. Glossary of Terms

DOSZ	National Union of Doctoral Students
EEA	European Economic Area
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
HE	Higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HÖOK	National Union of Students
IAB	International Advisory Board of the HAC
EMMI	Ministry of Human Capacities (formerly: Human Resources)
NQF	National (Hungarian) Qualification Framework, aligned with European QF
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act, the “quality loop”
QA	Quality assurance
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
VET	Vocational education and training



16. Annexes

1. Comparison between ESG Part 1 and HAC criteria
2. SWOT Analysis
3. Legislation governing the HAC

Additional documents can be found on the HAC website at www.mab.hu



Annex 1

Comparison between ESG Part 1 and HAC criteria

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

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



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



Education and learning outcome framework requirements

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



Initial accreditation of new programmes

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



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



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

Doctoral schools

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



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

Bachelor and Master programmes in disciplinary clusters

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



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



Annex 2

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis combines replies by HAC Board members and Secretariat staff

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly formulated, forward-looking strategic goals • Professional recognition of HAC, and the recognition of members of the Board and of the Expert Committees in their fields • Operations embedded into higher education, good traditions • Good relations with higher education actors (Ministry, Educational Authority, HEIs) • Public information and easy access to Board decisions • Decisive, focussed and flexible new leadership • Regulated operations that ensure independence, consistent decision-making, transparent operations, clear criteria • Supportive attitude in quality evaluation processes • Dedication to higher education of persons contributing to the HAC's processes, their experience and generous work, their ability and readiness to scrutinise issues and reach objective opinions • Knowledge base stemming from experience • International embeddedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of international experts, within country expert recruitment and a narrow expert base • Insubstantial ability to influence legal processes, earlier tense relationship with higher education policy makers • Before the introduction of the new procedures the preparation of experts was insufficient. There were not enough professional consultations or brainstorming • Professionally unstable pool of programme officers, which prevents adequate knowledge of national and international higher education regulations • Focus on formal criteria, overly bureaucratic operations • Expert committee structure not robust enough, some committees require more disciplined chairing • Inbreeding in a few expert committees



Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalisation, raising the number of foreign experts • Raising the cooperative and supportive role in helping HEIs develop their internal QA systems • Robust development of operations in accordance with ESG 2015 • The new education and learning outcome requirements provide a better framework for evaluating study programmes • Continuing to bolster secretariat staff • Disseminating detected good practice • Organising forums in order to discuss various procedures • Involving experts from industry and experts with practical experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable and quick legislative processes that affect both the HAC and HEIs • Intransparency regarding the mandate of HAC vis-à-vis the Educational Authority, which has adverse effect on both organisations • Partiality due to attachment to institution or field of expertise • Sometimes short deadlines, in some cases stemming from pressure by the Ministry to submit HAC opinion, which requires extra efforts to meet the deadlines that can lead to hasty and superficial work



Annex 3

Legislation governing HAC

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- Higher Education Act CCIV of 2011²⁴
- Government Decree on the Educational Authority 121/2013 (IV.26.)
- Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on higher education quality assurance and enhancement
- Government Decree 230/2012 (VIII.28) on higher education vocational training (VET)
- Government Decree 283/2012 (X.4) on the structure of teacher training, specialisations and the register of teacher training programmes
- Government Decree 387/2012 on doctoral schools and procedures regulating doctoral education and habilitation
- Government Decree on implementing the Higher Education Act 87/2015 (IV.9.)
- Government Decree listing higher education qualifications and on means of entry into the list 139/2015 (VI.9.)
- Government Decree on Bachelor and Master programmes and their education and learning outcome requirements in the field of political science and public administration 282/2016 (IX.21)
- Ministry of Human Capacities decree on education and learning outcome framework requirements for higher education vocational training, Bachelor and Master as well as common requirements for teacher training and teacher training programmes 8/2013 (I.30)
- Ministry of Human Capacities Decree on education and learning outcome framework requirements 15/2006 (IV.3.)
- Ministry of Human Capacities Decree on the general requirements for organising post-graduate specialist trainings 10/2006 (IX.25.)
- Ministry of Human Capacities decree on higher education VET education and learning outcome framework requirements 39/2012 (XI.21.)
- Ministry of Human Capacities decree regulating administrative fees in official higher education procedures 12/2013 (II.12.).

²⁴In English as it stood on 2nd September 2016 following repeated amendments since its issue in 2011: http://mizar.mab.hu/web/images/doc/hac/regulations/Nftv_angol_2Sept2016_EMMI%20forditas.pdf