

Annual Report 2014 to September 2015

The main actions taken by the HAC in 2014 until September 2015 encompassed,

1. **Legislated tasks**, submitting expert opinions on request of the Educational Authority, and other accreditation assignments,
 - Institutional accreditation
 - Program accreditation in disciplinary groups
 - Evaluation of applications for new VET programs
 - Evaluation of applications for new Bachelor and Master programs
 - Evaluation of framework program requirements for Bachelor and Master programs
 - Evaluation of applications for new doctoral schools
 - Evaluation towards renewal of accreditation of doctoral schools
 - Evaluation of applications for university professorships,
2. Consultations and commenting on **draft legislation and strategic documents** for the Ministry of Human Resources,
3. Preparing and participating in the **external review by ENQA** to receive full membership,
4. Dealing with **finances** as an integral aspect of the HAC's smooth operation,
5. Managing the HAC's **external relations**.

One of the HAC's guiding principles is to sustain the **transparency of its decision-making**; with the exception of personal information, the HAC's work can be followed on its website.

In response to the criticism by ENQA regarding the HAC's independence, and specifically the ratio of **HAC members** delegated by the minister, the number of HAC members rose in 2014 from 18 to 20, with delegates from the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** and from the **National Students' Union** added.

1. From among the over 2000 external experts in its database, the HAC is able to rely on a number of **committed academics and professionals who perform external evaluations** of ex-ante and ex-post evaluations. The HAC continues to pay special attention to the quality of doctoral schools and of university professors as the custodians of the quality of the country's higher education.
 - 1.1. In 2014 there were 17 appeals concerning university professorial positions lodged with the **Board of Appeals**. Of these, only 4 (23%) changed the HAC's original decision. Regarding decisions on other applications, appeals were lodged with the Educational Authority or the minister, who in second instance may also overturn decisions on university professorial positions. With six appeals against decisions on launching new programmes, one new VET programme and four university professorial positions, license was granted after a negative decision by the HAC. With the amended HAC By-Laws in 2015, appeals on the HAC's other decisions are possible. There were eleven appeals of which four were upheld by the Board of Appeals.
 - 1.2. The **guidelines for evaluating university professorial applications were changed in 2014**, with a modified scoring system for the individual criteria, but also allowing for the analysis of scientific or artistic achievement.

The table below provides an overview of ex ante evaluations in the past three years. (Data for 2015 until September only.)

| Application type | Discussed | | | Positive | | | Negative | | |
|---------------------|-----------|------|--------|----------|------|--------|----------|------|--------|
| | 2013 | 2014 | 9/2015 | 2013 | 2014 | 9/2015 | 2013 | 2014 | 9/2015 |
| VET program | 237 | 4 | 1 | 125 | 3 | 1 | 112 | 1 | 0 |
| Framework BA | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| New BA program | 31 | 40 | 9 | 10 | 17 | 4 | 21 | 23 | 5 |
| Framework MA | 10 | 20 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 11 | 2 |
| New MA program | 49 | 51 | 52 | 26 | 27 | 31 | 23 | 24 | 21 |
| New doctoral school | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | - | 3 |
| Univ. professors | 107 | 153 | 133 | 80 | 114 | 104 | 27 | 39 | 29 |

In addition, the HAC undertook the following ex post procedures in 2014 to 9/2015

| Type of procedure | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Program monitoring (BA and MA) | 8 (5 positive, 3 negative decisions) | 2 (2 negative decisions) |
| Institutional accreditation | 18 institutions (23 faculties) | 11 institutions (1 negative decision), (8 faculties) |
| Disciplinary accreditation | | |
| medicine | 4 | |
| dentistry | 4 | |
| pharmacy | 4 | |
| sports | 25 | |
| health sciences (ongoing) | | 52 |
| economics (ongoing) | | 195 |
| Appeals (Number of decisions) | 17 (4 positive decisions) | 11 (0 positive decisions) |
| Doctoral schools, core members | 149 doctoral schools, 1791 core members | 77 doctoral schools, 952 core members |

1.3. In 2014 and completed in January 2015, the **HAC reviewed the actuality of the formal requirements of all doctoral schools in Hungary**. Working together with the National Doctoral Council, the HAC worked out a procedure for the schools' quality assurance. Additionally, individual schools whose accreditation was running out were also reviewed as part of the ongoing work of the HAC.

The HAC doctoral database has access via a link to the school academic staff's publications database of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but due to technical and personal updating lags the HAC continues to ask for applications to list the ten publications the school considers most important, five of which are to be from the past five years.

An analysis of the experiences of this global review has continued throughout 2015 and is to be finalized at the October plenary meeting.

2. The **HAC is among the consultative bodies for higher education draft legislation**. It submitted its proposals on quality assurance issues for the amended Higher Education Act of

2014. Here, the number of HAC members was raised from 18 to 20, with the two additional members delegated by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and by the National Student's Union. A further, major amendment was passed in 2015 based on the new higher education strategy accepted by the government. In addition to merging some higher education institutions among the major changes, the HAC's decisions on master's programme accreditation are now binding for the Educational Authority when it grants or does not grant operating license. The HAC's Board of Appeals discusses not only ex-ante but ex-post accreditation matters as well. (Following any appeal, the minister may grant authorisation regardless of the HAC's or its Appeals Board decision. To distinguish this from accreditation as a quality judgment, the HAC raises awareness of its published accreditation decisions with the public.)

It should be noted here that with minor exceptions, numerous HAC comments on draft legislation have received little or no heed on the part of the ministry. In fact, the HAC considers it unfeasible with respect to the gravity of such matters – and considering the collective nature of a HAC response – that response deadlines are given at one to a few days.

3. Following the **HAC's review by ENQA** in 2013, the HAC received “full member under review” status with a letter dated 17 January 2014. The HAC did not comply with two standards among the ESG, these involving independence and financial resources. The HAC turned to the ministry to initiate relevant changes to the Higher Education Act.

The follow-up review by ENQA took place in spring 2015, with the site visit in January and the HAC preparing its self-evaluation report with a focus on the two points in late 2014. Subsequently, **the HAC was renewed its full membership in ENQA for five years**, dated from the original 2013 decision. The review panel report is accessible on the HAC's website at http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/mabmin/Report_FINAL_27.02.15.pdf.

4. The HAC's **budget and financial situation** have stabilized in 2014 to the degree that its smooth operation is assured. Its 2014 government support matched that of 2013. For 2015 it was again equal to that of the previous year (155 M HUF, ~ 490,000 EUR). Together with its own income, the amount is enough for its current operations. In 2015, the HAC participated in a research project on accreditation criteria for teacher training, for which it received 20 M HUF (64,000 EUR). The HAC president regularly consults with the secretary of state on financing. E.g. the HAC has asked for a contribution to fund the ENQA Members' Forum to be held in Budapest in April 2016 (statement of obligation expected).

5. The HAC's **external relations** extend to ongoing contacts with the **Hungarian Rectors' Conference** and the **National Doctoral Council**, at whose meetings the HAC president is a permanently invited member. HAC members often represent the Committee at events organized by higher education institutions. A representative of the Rectors' Conference, the Doctoral Council and the Higher Education Planning Body are permanently invited to the public part of the HAC's plenary meetings, as are the members of the HAC's Financial Supervisory Board and Board of Appeals.

The HAC's **Hungarian Advisory Board** meets annually; the last meeting was held on 27 March 2015. The discussion revolved around the employability of graduates in various fields, and in how far the academic staff's good teaching or good research contributes to the success of learning outcomes. They also discussed the possible reasons why the HAC was visibly losing its one-time prestige, among them the fact that the minister now and again authorizes a

programme or university professorial position against the decision of the HAC. However, no common conclusion was reached.

The **International Advisory Board** also meets annually, with its last meeting on 31 October and 1 November 2014. The discussion covered the national higher education strategy and issues raised in the ENQA review report. The 2015 meeting is scheduled for 30-31 October, where the HAC's future strategy and procedures are on the agenda. The Board's recommendations can be read on the HAC' website.

The HAC receives visitors interested in quality assurance from various countries and organizations. These events can be followed on the HAC website in the News section.

Finally, the HAC regularly recommends its experts on request of quality assurance organizations in other countries, and HAC staff members participate or have participated in the boards of international organizations (ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA).