

Hungarian Accreditation Committee
External Evaluation 2013

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT



March 2013

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1. Abbreviations

ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines, or in full: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HAC	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
EMMI	Ministry of Human Resources
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

2. Foreword

The current Self-Evaluation Report is the third such report in the HAC's twenty-year history. Its first external evaluation by an international review team took place in 1999/2000, the second – to renew ENQA membership – in 2007/08. In line with the European Standards and Guidelines and the criteria for ENQA membership, this third review follows after five years.

The Hungarian higher education landscape has changed very recently, with a new higher education act in place for just over a year and, in its wake, a new HAC functioning since March 1, 2012.

The HAC acknowledges that the government's stepped-up legislative activity, and a few parliamentary motions for changes to the proposed legislation, has led to certain inconsistencies in the legal framework. There are important paragraphs in the higher education act that were passed without due consideration. The HAC noted those incongruent sections that affect it, which have to do with its independence and financing. The Ministry of Human Resources has been receptive to the HAC's arguments and is presently working on modifications to the law and related government decrees. In fact, an amendment to the 2011 law is foreseen just as this review is being planned. As a consequence, some questions will have to be discussed with the review team that could not be incorporated into this report.

In this environment, the HAC, and higher education quality assurance in Hungary overall, is looking forward to the reflections and constructive recommendations of the international expert team. For this, I thank its members and ENQA!

Professor Ervin Balázs
President
HAC

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

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) adopted by the European Ministers of Education in Bergen in 2005 call for the external review of a European quality assurance agency's activities at least every five years. In addition, the regulations for membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) call for an external review every five years, according to the ENQA membership criteria. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) initiated its external evaluation for the purpose of renewing its full membership in ENQA and in compliance with its membership criteria and the ESG. In this context, the HAC would like to learn how experts judge the HAC's activities in the Hungarian context. This involves the legal environment in which HAC works and the degree to which it is able to comply with the legislation as well as the HAC's internal regulations, standards and procedures. This is the second HAC review for ENQA membership purposes (and the third external review of HAC), therefore the evaluation will look at the recommendations in the 2008 review and comment on the success of the actions the HAC has taken in response to them.

The Terms of Reference for the current ENQA evaluation of the HAC were agreed on with ENQA and finalized in December 2012. They are attached in full as **Appendix 1** to this self-evaluation report (SER).

The external review is a type A evaluation as defined in the ENQA *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*, p. 6¹. It follows from the above that the purpose of the review is

- To check compliance with the ESG and additional ENQA membership criteria.

The evaluation criteria against which the review panel shall assess the HAC are

- ENQA Membership Criteria 1-8, set down in the ENQA Statutes.²

For the self-evaluation process the HAC assigned a staff member with experience in international reviews to draft the SER, with ongoing consultation with the HAC president, the secretary-general, and staff colleagues. Background documents were consulted, primarily HAC standards, procedures and criteria, guidelines and handbooks and pertaining legislation and resolutions, as well as additional material, such as the annual satisfaction surveys of institutions and review panel members following institutional and programmatic HAC evaluations. Important feedback on the HAC was given recent satisfaction surveys to institutions, review teams and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference as well as SWOT analyses by HAC members, staff and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference.

¹

<http://www.enqa.eu/files/Guidelines%20for%20external%20reviews%20of%20quality%20assurance%20agencies%20in%20the%20EHEA.pdf>

² <http://www.enqa.eu/files/Statutes%20of%20ENQA%2007.10.2011.pdf>

The following chapters serve to describe the context in which the HAC operates and its modes of operation, while **Chapter 8** will provide an analysis and self-evaluation of the HAC against the ENQA criteria.

4. Outline of the national higher education system

The following description of the Hungarian higher education system is cited, with some updates, from the National Bologna Report for 2009-2012.

The multi-cycle (“Bologna”) training structure has been introduced in Hungary starting from the 2006-2007 academic year, based on the Higher Education Act passed in 2005. Prior to that, college degree programs and university degree programs existed in parallel. These programs have been phased out, since 2006 new entrants are only admitted to programs in accordance with the Act on Higher Education of 2005. ... Former college degrees and university degrees are considered equivalent to current first cycle (BA/BSc) and second cycle degrees (MA/MSc), respectively Programs within the framework of religious training ... offered by higher education institutions maintained by Churches are not regulated by national legislation. Church-maintained accredited higher education institutions can provide religious and non-religious training. They are authorized to develop the structure and content of their religious training programs and get funding for both their religious and non-religious programs from the State (based on an agreement between the Republic of Hungary, the Government or the Minister responsible for higher education). Non-religious programs as defined in the relevant national legislation and student numbers per type of training have been taken into account irrespective of the type of maintainer The higher education system of Hungary includes postgraduate specialist training courses which do not fit into the typical Bologna structure.... Postgraduate specialist training courses (*szakirányú továbbképzés*) are 2-4 semester (1-2 year) long programs with a 60-120 ECTS credit range open to holders of a first or second cycle degree (and of former college or university degrees), leading to a new professional qualification without an additional higher education degree. In the case of a small number of first cycle programs offering several specializations (in the fields of humanities, health sciences and special education), related postgraduate specialist training courses are available for graduates later willing to acquire a further specialization of their first cycle program. ...

National legislation guarantees that all first cycle programs give access to at least one second cycle program. Although 2-year (120 ECTS credits) higher-level vocational [i.e. VET] programs offered by higher education institutions are currently not considered as first cycle programs, students later entering specific first cycle programs have the opportunity to get at least 90 (or 30, depending on the actual program) of their credits acquired in higher-level vocational training validated as part of their first cycle course. ...

The number of accredited doctoral schools is 172 in the 2012-2013 academic year. Doctoral training constitutes the third cycle within the current Hungarian higher

education system. A model for the training structure of all doctoral programs is defined in national legislation: doctoral programs consist of thirty-six months divisible into assessment periods. They encompass teaching, research, and assessment-related activities conducted either individually or in groups, tailored to the particularities of the given discipline of science and the actual Ph.D. / DLA [i.e. art] students. Only students holding a master degree are eligible to attend doctorate courses. After completion of the doctorate course, the doctoral degree shall be taken in the course of a separate procedure of degree award. Students enrolling for the doctoral degree award procedure are considered Ph.D./DLA candidates. Those who have not attended the doctorate course but have prepared for the degree award procedure individually can also become Ph.D./DLA candidates. In the event the Ph.D./DLA candidate enrolls for the degree award procedure while still on the program, then he/she will have student status and at the same time be a Ph.D./DLA candidate. ... All doctoral programs require certified competencies in foreign languages (specified by doctoral schools), both upon entrance and completion.³

The Bologna report estimates that 25-50% of first-cycle graduates go on to study at master's level and 8-10% of these to Ph.D. level.⁴

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

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

Students may participate in state-funded education for 12 terms, subject to their adequate performance (doctoral studies are not included in the calculation). In 2011/12, 58% of tertiary students were in publicly financed places while 42% (those achieving a lower entrance-point average but still above the minimum range) paid tuition⁵. While a few months prior to the time of the writing of this SER the government decided to not grant fully funded student places in all study programs (arguing that there is saturation in fields such as law and communications), following negotiations with the National Union of Students they decided that all programs will have at least some fully funded places in the coming academic year. The minimum entrance points per study field are not yet fixed, however. An elaborate student

³ Section 3 is updated from the Hungarian National Report Regarding the Bologna Process Implementation 2009-2012, Hungary, <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Hungary%20Annex.pdf> p. 5-7.

⁴ National Report Regarding the Bologna Process Implementation 2009-2012, Hungary, <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Hungary%20Annex.pdf> p. 5-6.

⁵ Statistical Yearbook of Education 2011/2012

http://www.kormany.hu/download/8/f9/b0000/Oktat%C3%A1si_%C3%89vk%C3%B6nyv_2011_2012.pdf p.

loan system has been set up years ago and from September 1, 2006, in order to promote the mobility of students, student loans are also available for studies abroad. A second loan type exclusively for tuition was introduced in 2012.

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

Until September 2012 the consent of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee was required for the enactment of the government decree pertaining to the rules of doctoral studies, and as stipulated in the Higher Education Act, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee provides an opinion in the course of the procedure for the establishment, transformation of higher education institutions, launching a first cycle or master training, or the establishment of a faculty or a doctoral school.

Currently 67 HEIs are listed in the HE Act: 19 state, 5 denominational, 2 privately funded universities and 9 state, 20 denominational and 11 private colleges. There are four Hungarian language HEIs in the Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia catering mostly to the Hungarian minorities in these countries, and they are not accredited by the HAC (they operate under the respective national law). In addition, there are 28 foreign HEIs licensed to operate in Hungary.⁶

In the academic year 2011/12, 360 thousand students were studying in higher education, which was an 0.4% decline from the previous year. Of these, 242 thousand studied full-time. 87% were enrolled in public institutions, 5.8% in denominational and 7.2% in private/foundation institutions.⁷

The following tables provide an overview of some main figures and trends in Hungarian higher education, taken from the government's Statistical Yearbook on Education 2011/2012. Further statistics may be found in the Yearbook, cited in the footnotes.

⁶http://www.oktatas.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi_intezmenyek/engedellyel_mukodo_kulfoldi_intezmenyek

⁷ Statistical Yearbook of Education 2011/2012
http://www.kormany.hu/download/8/f9/b0000/Oktat%C3%A1si_%C3%89vk%C3%B6nyv_2011_2012.pdf p. 16.

Table 1: Number of 19-22 year-olds and full-time students in tertiary education⁸

A 19-22 éves népesség, illetve a felsőoktatási intézmények nappali tagozatos hallgatói
Number of 19-22 years old population and full-time students in tertiary institutions

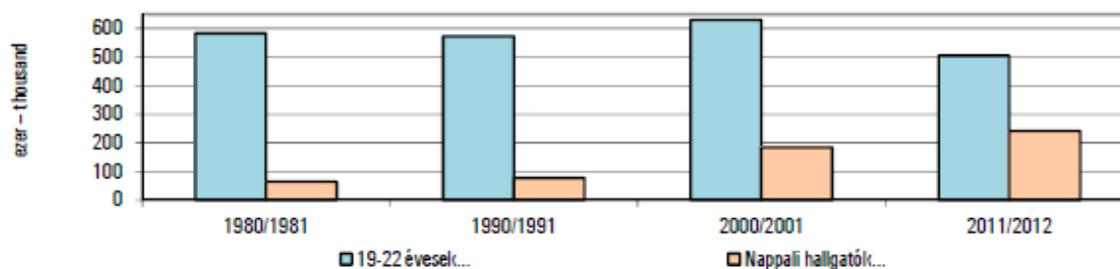
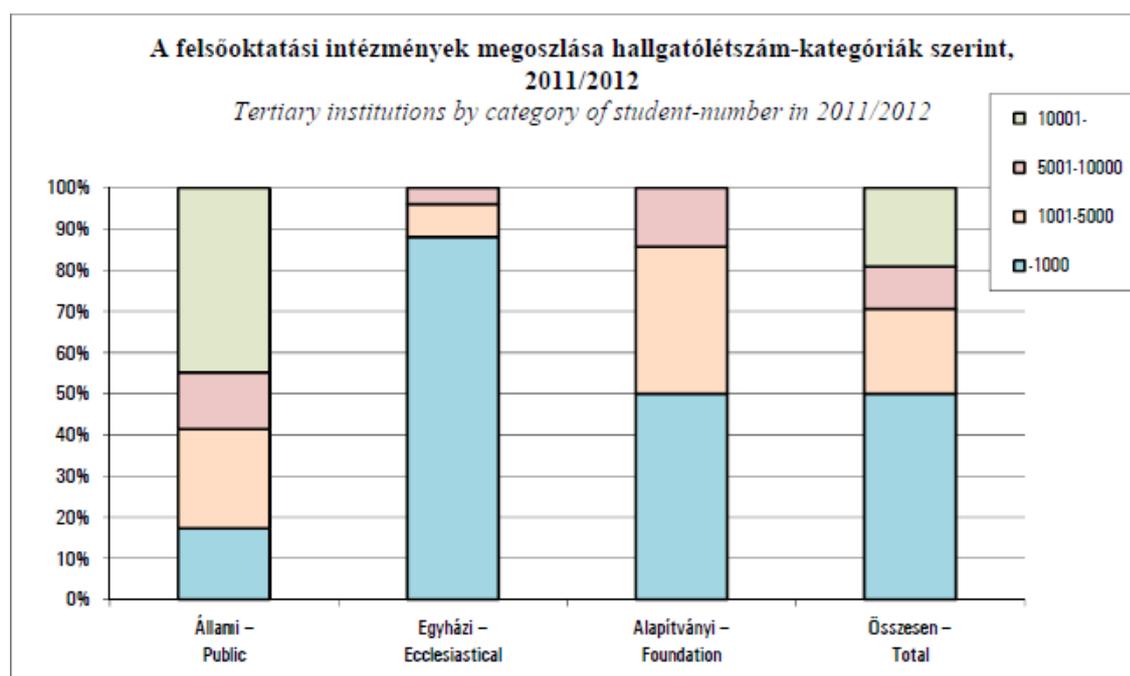


Table 2: Distribution of students in public, denominational and private/foundation HEI in 2011/12⁹



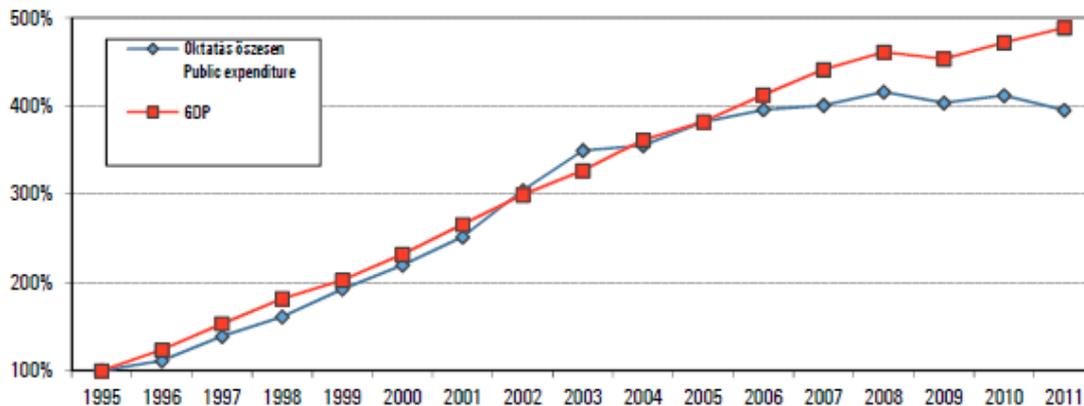
⁸ Statistical Yearbook of Education 2011/2012
http://www.kormany.hu/download/8/f9/b0000/Oktat%C3%A1si_%C3%89vk%C3%B6nyv_2011_2012.pdf p. 12

⁹ Statistical Yearbook of Education 2011/2012
http://www.kormany.hu/download/8/f9/b0000/Oktat%C3%A1si_%C3%89vk%C3%B6nyv_2011_2012.pdf p. 13

Public expenditure on education in total was 4.3% of the country's GDP. The following table shows the growth in higher education expenditure relative to 1995.

Table 3: *Relative change in public expenditure on education from 1995 until 2011*¹⁰

A költségvetés oktatási kiadásainak és a GDP-nek változása (1995=100)
Changes of public expenditure on educational institutions and of the GDP (1995=100)



5. The HAC and higher education accreditation in Hungary

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

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

The legal framework governing the HAC is provided in **Chapter 7** below. Some changes, however, fundamentally affect the HAC and its activities and are therefore discussed at this point.

¹⁰ Statistical Yearbook of Education 2011/2012

http://www.kormany.hu/download/8/f9/b0000/Oktat%C3%A1si_%C3%89vk%C3%B6nyv_2011_2012.pdf p.

5.1. The HAC after the new Higher Education Act

In Hungary, a new act on higher education, the Act on National Higher Education CCIV/2011, was passed by Parliament on December 23, 2011. With the exception of some clauses, it went into effect on September 1, 2012. The exception pertains to the Hungarian Accreditation Committee; consequently, the term of the actual HAC body was shortened by 11 months and a new HAC started operations on March 1st. As this is a new law (the third in Hungary after the 1993 and 2005 acts), a range of implementing regulations had to be drafted and accepted. The government decree on the HAC (also dealing with the Higher Education Planning Body, formerly Higher Education and Research Council) was issued on February 22, 2012, titled *On Specific Issues Regarding Higher Education Quality Evaluation and Development* (19/2012 (II. 22.)).

According to the Act Section 70 (1)¹¹,

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is a national expert body promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the scientific quality of higher education, scientific research, and the quality of artistic creation, which participates under this Act in procedures relating to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctorate schools.

The HAC's membership was reduced from 19 to 18, with half the members delegated by the Minister of Human Resources (there was no member delegated by the Minister in the former HAC). The HAC president is selected by the Minister in agreement with the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. All receive their letters of appointment by the Prime Minister. External stakeholders are no longer represented, there is no foreign member in the HAC any more, and only the national body of doctoral students delegates a member but the national union of students does not. The membership term, once renewable, was extended from three to six years.

The five-year evaluation cycle has been retained: the Educational Authority reviews operating licenses of higher education institutions every five years, for which the opinion of the HAC is required. A fundamental change is that all applications, except those for professorial appointments, are submitted to the Educational Authority, which forwards it to the HAC with a request for its opinion. The HAC, in turn, submits its findings to the Authority, whose job is to register the institution or program. At least as far as the law is concerned, the HAC no longer directly conveys its quality evaluation to higher education institutions. The HAC has *de facto* decision-making power vis-à-vis the Educational Authority only with regard to doctoral schools (it is bound by the HAC's decision), but following appeal to the Minister, he or she may grant operating licenses also to doctoral schools regardless of the HAC's decision.

The HAC has got a new task, the evaluation of new short-cycle vocational higher education (VET) programs¹², for which it has set a special expert committee.

According to the law there is an Appeals Committee alongside the HAC, but given that only university professor applications are submitted directly to the HAC, it is only with these

¹¹ http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Ftv2012_Eng.pdf

¹² It is not mentioned in the law but the tertiary-level vocational programs are in line with ISCED 2011.

applications that appeals must be lodged with the HAC (all others may be appeal through the Educational Authority). The three members of the Appeals Committee are delegated by the Minister and appointed by the Prime Minister.

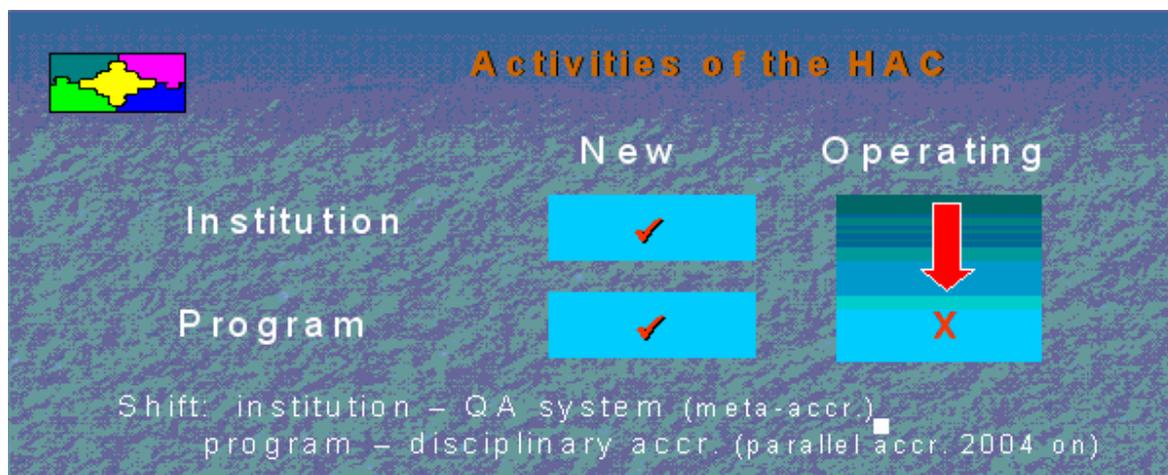
While the *European Standards and Guidelines* do not appear in the higher education act, following negotiations with the Ministry, and correspondence with the ENQA President, the government decree legislates that the HAC conducts its evaluations in line with the ESG. That means that while universities and colleges are not legally compelled to abide by the ESG, the HAC has the opportunity and responsibility to instill European standards for quality assurance also explicitly into the institutional culture. It should be noted at this point that the Ministry has requested the HAC to propose changes for amendments to the Higher Education Act, which the HAC did in early February 2013. It is to be seen whether or not, and to what extent, these proposals will find their way into the Act; the amendments are planned to be passed in spring 2013.

Looking back to the operation of the HAC over the past year it seems that although the legal limitations are more constraining as compared to the first two decades in the HAC's history, the new body is dedicated and thorough in its work, ready to argue key issues and conscientious in its decisions.

5.2. Activities in historical perspective

In the 1990s, the HAC evaluated higher education institutions and, in the same procedure, all its programs. The first full cycle of this type of accreditation was completed in 2000. Prior to launching its second cycle in 2004, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee had begun a pilot project where it evaluated all study programs in the country in two disciplines, history and psychology, within a short timeframe and with the same visiting teams. The parallel, disciplinary accreditation was considered successful, both in its reception and results, and has continued since then. Until the end of 2012, programs in law, medicine, pharmaceuticals, dentistry, psychology, history, a range of art and music fields, theater and dance, various motion picture fields, computer sciences, agriculture and teacher training were evaluated. Concurrently, the HAC introduced a new institutional accreditation procedure, which focuses on institutional governance, management and the internal quality assurance mechanisms of a college or university.

Table 4: *Activities relating to institutional and program accreditation*



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

6. External Quality Assurance Undertaken by the HAC

6.1. Scope

The main activities of the HAC are to evaluate and accredit new degree programs and new higher education institutions and existing ones in five-year cycles. (It should be noted that the word “accreditation” appears exclusively in the name of the HAC, nowhere else in the current legal regulations.) In addition, there are various intermittent tasks. The range of duties is set down in the Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on higher education quality assurance and enhancement, and is elaborated in the HAC’s By-laws¹³ as follows,

The HAC’s Tasks

Expert Activity for Public Administration Procedures

Granting operating licenses for higher education institutions and reviewing operating licenses

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions for granting operating licenses of higher education institutions and in procedures to review such operating licenses.

¹³ http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/szabalyok/121001MAB_SZMSZ_H.doc (the full text is in Hungarian)

In the course of preparing its expert opinion, the HAC assesses education, scientific research and artistic activities against standards set down in legislation and the HAC's assessment criteria. In addition, it assesses for which field of study and/or discipline and educational level the institution the institutions meets the necessary requirements.

Changing information set down in a higher education institution's deed of foundation

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues an expert opinion in procedures aiming to change any information with respect to scientific and related educational and research matters set down in a higher education institution's founding deed.

Granting operating licenses and reviewing education

Establishing new bachelor and master programs (education and outcome requirements)

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions on applications for establishing new bachelor or master programs.

In developing its expert opinion, the HAC examines whether the proposed education and outcome requirements for the new program developed by the applicant institution comply with the legal framework. Moreover, the HAC examines whether the education and outcome requirements provide a suitable basis for designing a study program that will ensure that students are able to attain the knowledge and competences appropriate for the given level that will allow them to advance to a higher qualification level or to obtain a scientific degree in the given field, and that meet the needs of the job market.

New bachelor and master programs to be launched at an institution

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions in procedures for licensing or reviewing (or discontinuing) bachelor or master programs at higher education institutions.

In developing its expert opinion, the HAC examines whether the institution has worked out an educational plan for the proposed program in accordance with the legal framework and the appropriate education and outcome requirements. The HAC further examines whether the program or proposed program ensures that students are able to attain the knowledge and competences appropriate for the given level that will allow them to advance to a higher qualification level or obtain a scientific degree in the given field, and which meet the needs of the job market. Moreover the HAC examines whether the institution's staff and facilities ensure the quality of education and research.

Hungarian higher education institutions launching off-site programs abroad

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions in procedures for licensing or reviewing (or discontinuing) bachelor or master programs offered by higher education institutions off site or in a foreign country.

In developing its expert opinion, the HAC examines the program against its regular standards and criteria. In addition, it examines whether the site has the needed administration and facilities at the site.

Establishing and launching doctoral schools and doctoral education

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions in procedures for establishing or discontinuing doctoral schools.

Operating licenses for foreign higher education institutions in Hungary

On request of the Educational Authority, the HAC issues expert opinions for licensing foreign higher education institutions in Hungary or in procedures reviewing such operating licenses.

Other activities

Issuing opinions on university professor applications

On request of a higher education institution, the HAC issues its opinion on applications for university professorships in procedures to grant professorial positions.

In developing its expert opinion on university professorial positions, the HAC examines on the basis of the application whether the applicant complies with the conditions for such positions set down in the Higher Education Act Section 28 (5) and assesses the applicant's teaching and scientific or artistic qualifications.

On request of the Minister to conduct an appeals procedure, the HAC Appeals Board issues an expert opinion on the application.

Accreditation and quality assessment supporting the enhancement of higher education programs and higher education institutions

On request of the Educational Authority or the Minister, the HAC carries out assessments and issues reports relating to the enhancement of running higher education programs and existing higher education institutions.

On request of a higher education institution, the HAC assesses the higher education institution and its quality assurance system.

Following a timetable agreed on with the Educational Authority and in conjunction with the review of operating licenses of higher education institutions, the HAC conducts institutional and program accreditation at operating higher education institutions.

Institutional accreditation

Following a timetable agreed on with the Educational Authority and in conjunction with the review of operating licenses of higher education institutions, the HAC assesses and accredits the conditions for education, academic research and artistic activity and the organizational and operational arrangements at higher education institutions in five-year cycles, in accordance with its assessment criteria based on

the ESG, and with special regard to the content of the institution's quality development scheme. It assesses whether the scheme is in compliance with the ESG, its organizational background, how it is executed and its outcomes evaluated, and how the outcome requirements are monitored.

Program accreditation

Following a timetable agreed on with the Educational Authority the HAC conducts program accreditation by conducting the analysis, evaluation and accreditation of bachelor and master programs in groups of study fields and branches¹⁴ based on its evaluation standards and criteria, and focusing on the outcome requirements.

Accreditation of doctoral schools

In conducting the accreditation of doctoral schools, the HAC evaluates the staff and facilities supporting doctoral schools as well as the education and research or artistic activity at the doctoral schools. Based on the results, it accredits them on the basis of its standards and criteria.

Monitoring/follow-up procedures

Based on its evaluation standards and criteria, the HAC conducts follow-up procedures to monitor the development of education, scientific research or artistic activity at higher education institutions and monitors in how far they accomplish the measures set down in their quality development program and the observations and recommendations for quality enhancement after previous evaluation procedures.

International involvement in quality enhancement

The HAC keeps track of higher education quality development in the European Higher Education Area and participates actively in international activities related to higher education quality enhancement.

Issuing opinions on draft laws

If requested, the HAC issues its opinion on draft legislation.

Initiating reviews of legal compliance

If there are substantial reasons to initiate a review with the Educational Authority, the HAC will initiate such a review.

If there are substantial reasons to initiate a review of sound legality, the HAC will initiate such a review by the Minister.

It follows from the legislation and the By-Laws, including the description of the HAC's activities outlined above that the HAC's main activities are

- ex ante evaluation of new higher education institutions
- ex ante evaluation of new faculties at existing higher education institutions
- ex ante evaluation of VET programs

¹⁴ The branches of study within individual study fields are set down in Government Decree 289/2005. (XII. 22.)

- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of bachelor programs
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of master programs
- ex ante evaluation of bachelor programs to be launched at an institution
- ex ante evaluation of master programs to be launched at an institution
- ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities
- ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions by universities
- ex post accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles
- ex post accreditation of VET and degree programs and doctoral schools in five-year cycles

An English summary of the HAC’s activities and related regulations is available on the HAC website under “Institutional Guidebook”.¹⁵

The table below indicates the number of itemized ex ante and ex post decisions for the past three years.

Table 5: *HAC decisions in 2010, 2011 and 2012*

Type		Supported			Not supported		
		2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Ex ante accredit. - bachelor programs	Establishment nationally	1	2	4	9	1	1
	Launching at HEI	31	33	17	37	17	27
Ex-ante accred. - master programs	Establishment nationally	12	18	8	13	7	6
	Launching at HEI	86	53	49	44	47	35
Monitored	Bachelor progr’s	6	4	1	9	4	0
	Master progr’s	0	3	1	0	1	0
Ex-post institutional accreditation		8	7	8	0	0	0
Ex-post accreditation of all running programs in a discipline (bachelor + master)		29	71	35	0	0	0
Evaluation of professorial appointments		104	98	90	94	40	32

¹⁵ www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Accr_criteria_101012.pdf (summary English version)

Type		Supported			Not supported		
		2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Accreditation of doctoral schools	Ex ante, new	2	1	3	1	5	1
	Ex post schools and core members	39	135	43	12	81	17

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

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

A major part of HAC's work are ex ante evaluations of applications to establish and grant state recognition to higher education institutions and faculties; of national education and outcome requirements as framework requirements for all degree programs taught in Hungary; and of study programs to be newly launched at a college or university. Ex ante evaluation is initiated by the applicant institution that wishes to launch a new degree program. If the program is not yet taught in the country, national education and outcome requirements have also to be worked out and published by the Minister as annexes to Ministerial Decree OM 15/2006. From September 2012 on, this is done in the same procedure with the launching (licensing) of the program for the given HEI. If the national education and outcome requirements already exist, an institution will apply for launching the program and the HAC checks whether the designed program conforms to the framework set down in the education and outcome requirements. The education and outcome requirements are flexible to some extent, it is up to the institution to decide if their proposed program fits into an existing framework. The HAC criteria require a new framework requirement to be at least 40% different to qualify as new, and it is a task of the HAC to judge it. In addition, it checks if the conditions for the program at the applicant institution are suitable for teaching it.

Sporadically in the past the HAC was charged with evaluating post-secondary vocational programs. The task was introduced again with the new, 2011 Higher Education Act, according to which VET programs are 120-150 ECTS to be studied in maximum five semesters and 30 to 120 ECTS must be transferable to bachelor programs, the exact volume to be determined in the education and outcome requirements.

Another task of the HAC is to review applications by foreign higher education institutions to function in Hungary, either alone or in conjunction with a Hungarian institution. The HAC's By-Laws regulate the framework for dealing with such applications.

It is important to note that since the last external review of the HAC, the agency has set up a database called TIR¹⁶ (short for "Secretariat Information System") containing not only all accredited institutions, programs and other resolutions as well as its pool of experts but from

¹⁶ <http://web.mab.hu/tir>, also accessible from the HAC website.

which most expert evaluations are conducted. In addition, voting at the plenary meetings is done through a closed-circuit section of the TIR.

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

Filing → formal check by secretariat → chair(s) of respective HAC committee(s) appoint(s) reviewers → reviewers formulate written opinion → respective committee(s) discuss(es) the case and make(s) proposal for decision [→ (in case of professorial applications and doctoral schools only) Professorial and Doctoral College discusses the case, accepts or revises committee proposal and makes proposal for decision] → HAC plenary discusses and makes the decision → secretariat prepares letter to the Educational Authority (or HEI in the case of professorial applications) → president checks and signs letter.

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

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

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

Beyond these, the HAC has its own set of criteria for evaluation and accreditation. (Regarding HAC criteria please see **ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7** below).

The HAC is not a legal authority. Its decisions and resolutions are, in legal terms, expert opinions considered by the Educational Authority when making the licensing decision. In cases where a HEI does not agree with the Educational Authority decision, it may lodge an appeal with the Minister, who has the power of decision.

6.3. Doctoral schools

The HAC accredits doctoral schools both in ex ante and ex post procedures. The accreditation benchmarks consist of a government decree on doctoral schools¹⁷ and the HAC’s “Requirements for establishing and operating doctoral schools”. All data provided by the doctoral schools as well as the entire evaluation process elaboration and documentation are run via an Internet-accessed database¹⁸, which, when introduced five years ago in

¹⁷ Government Decree 387/2012 on doctoral schools and procedures regulating doctoral education and habilitation

¹⁸ www.doctori.hu, also accessible from the HAC website.

collaboration with the National Doctoral Council, was the first of its kind in Hungarian higher education. The data provided by the institutions are public, but the expert evaluations invited by the HAC are not publicly accessible. The HAC's final decisions are public.

With doctoral schools, the Educational Authority is legally bound to abide by the HAC's decisions, though the institution may appeal directly to the Minister who is not bound by the HAC's decision.

6.4. University professorial positions

The HAC considers the vetting of prospective university professors an important part of its mission to ensure the quality of higher education in Hungary. This task was assigned to the HAC with an amendment to the Higher Education Act in 2000 and prior to the new 2005 act it pertained also to college professors. The measure was in part designed to curb the proliferation of positions of full professors due in part to financial advantage.

6.5. Ex post institutional and program accreditation

The external benchmarks for accreditation are, on the highest level, set in a general way in the Higher Education Act Section 70 (1), noted above, which charges the HAC with

“... promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the scientific quality of higher education, scientific research, and the quality of artistic creation, which participates under this Act in procedures relating to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctorate schools..”

This is described a bit more specifically in the Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on higher education quality assurance and enhancement states in Section 22 (1) and (2) and expounded in the HAC By-Laws as noted above. Against this legislative background the HAC issues its standards, criteria and procedures, set down in guidebooks.

Since 2010, following an amendment to the previous Higher Education Act, the HAC has been conducting ex post evaluation and accreditation in five-year cycles. Institutional accreditation is in its third cycle while separate disciplinary program accreditation is still going through its first cycle.

It must be added that the ex post evaluation/accreditation activities of HAC, and their legal basis, are currently under discussion with the Ministry and the Educational Authority.

A detailed analysis of the process is provided in **Chapter 7** below.

7. Legal and operational framework

7.1. Mission and values

The HAC considers it its primary mission to safeguard the quality of Hungarian higher education and to meet the needs with respect to higher education quality of its stakeholders: higher education institutions, students, parents, employers, the government and society at large.

With the adoption of a quality policy statement at its plenary meeting in December 2007, the HAC elaborated its quality policy, including its mission, extensively. The HAC quality

policy, containing the mission statement cited here, is available on the HAC website (also in English).¹⁹

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

Higher education institutions are tasked with setting up quality development programs within the scope of exercising their autonomy, in order to maintain and improve quality in higher education on the level of individual degree programs and institutional operation. The HAC supports their task by regularly evaluating them and formulating recommendations for them in the course of their accreditation procedure. At the same time the HAC, in accordance with the law, also provides assistance to the government in steering higher education by contributing its expert conclusions for individual public-administrative decisions concerning quality and general educational policy concepts, and on new and amended draft legislation.

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

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

At the same time the HAC attaches importance to upholding and cultivating its contacts with the higher education institutions, the Rectors' Conference, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Higher Education Planning Council, the National Union of Students and the National Union of Doctoral Students as well as the Ministry of Human Resources.

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

¹⁹ http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/hac/publications/HACsQA_130225.doc

7.2. Regulations and policies

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

Legislation governing the HAC's operations

- European Standards and Guidelines
- Higher Education Act CCIV of 2011²⁰
- Government Decree 289/2005 on the bachelor and master program structure
- Government Decree 19/2012 (II.22) on higher education quality assurance and enhancement
- Government Decree 79/2006 on implementing the Higher Education Act
- Government Decree 307/2006 on the Educational Authority (of the Ministry of Education and Culture)
- Government Decree 387/2012 on doctoral schools and procedures regulating doctoral education and habilitation
- Government Decree 230/2012 (VIII.28) on higher education vocational training (VET)
- Government Decree 283/2012 (X.4) on the structure of teacher training, specializations and the register of teacher training programs
- Continually updated list of Education and Outcome Requirements for bachelor and master as well as teacher training programs on Ministry website²¹ as annexes to Ministerial Decree 15/2006.

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,

Basic HAC documents

- Deed of Foundation of the HAC
- HAC Strategy²²

Regulations and procedures

- The HAC's By-Laws
- Procedures for Board of Financial Supervisors²³
- Code of Ethics²⁴

Rules and guidelines for application submissions and accreditation

For the full list, in English, please consult the HAC website under "Regulations"²⁵

²⁰ In English at http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Ftv2012_Eng.pdf

²¹ In Hungarian at www.kormany.hu

²² In English at www.mab.hu

²³ Translated in the Higher Education Act as „Review Committee”

²⁴ In English at <http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/hac/regulations/ethics.doc>. The Hungarian version has been slightly revised in 2004.

²⁵ At http://www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=336&Itemid=677&lang=en

7.3. Organization and decision-making

7.3.1. Membership and meeting participation

As set down in its Deed of Foundation, which is being updated following the new Act, the HAC is “a public benefit organization with legal entity not recorded in the registry court”. The final clause means that the HAC is not registered as an organization by the relevant court, but by the Educational Authority.

The delegation of HAC members is set down in the Higher Education Act, Section 71, as follows,

(1) The Hungarian Accreditation Committee shall be comprised of 18 members. The Minister shall delegate 9 members, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences 2 members, the Hungarian Academy of Arts 1 member, the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference 3 members, religious legal entities maintaining higher education institutions 2 members, and the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. and DLA Students 1 member. With the exception of the member delegated by the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. and DLA Students, all members shall hold scientific qualification. During delegation, the delegating entities shall coordinate with each other in order to ensure the proportionate representation of larger fields of science. Members of the Higher Education Planning Board, rectors, and government officials may not be members of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee.

(2) From the members of the Committee, the Minister and the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences proposes the president of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The President shall be appointed by the Prime Minister.

Members are appointed for a six-year term, with the exception of the Ph.D. student representative, who is appointed for two years. The terms are renewable once. They receive a legally set monthly fee.

In addition to the membership, the HAC permanently invited representatives of the Ministry, the National Union of Students, the Educational Authority, the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference and the Higher Education Planning Board to participate in the public part of the plenary meetings without voting rights.

7.3.2. Statutory boards

Board of Financial Supervisors

The HAC has a Board of Financial Supervisors, as is legally mandated for public benefit organizations. Their task is to oversee the HAC’s financial operation.

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 once renewable. They receive a legally set semiannual fee and are *ex officio* invited to participate in the public part of the HAC plenary meetings.

Board of Appeals

As noted earlier, the Act stipulates an Appeals Board for the HAC. It has three members who are delegated by the Minister. Their mandates are also for six years, once renewable, and they receive monthly fees equal to those of the HAC members.

The Board of Appeals operates independently of the HAC and its members may participate in the public part of the HAC plenary meetings. Their task is to review cases in which the HAC is requested to issue a second opinion, based on the same standards and criteria that the HAC uses.

7.3.3. Expert committees

The HAC has standing and ad hoc committees. The former group encompasses the committees for disciplinary groups, dealing for a large part with ex ante accreditation, or for dealing with specific subjects. They are chaired by a HAC member and include up to 19 external members.

Expert committees for disciplines

- Agriculture
- Humanities
- Religion and theology
- Engineering
- Art
- Medicine
- Social sciences
- Natural sciences

Other committees

- College of University professorship and doctoral issues
- Conflict of interest and ethics
- Higher vocational education (VET)
- Teacher training

Review teams (called visiting committees) are set up to conduct site visits.

7.3.4. Decision-making

Accreditation decisions of the HAC pass through a hierarchy of levels. For ex ante evaluation, two or three external experts are invited from the HAC's standing pool of over 1500 experts accumulated over the years to evaluate applications via the HAC's TIR database, for which they receive an access code. (For the procedure on the selection of experts please see under Standard 2.4. in **Chapter 8**.) The replies are collated by an assigned staff member and brought before the expert committee for the relevant discipline. This committee discusses the application and received expert reviews in depth and makes a recommendation to the plenary, reported by the committee chair.

Ex post institutional accreditation involves site visits by review teams, separate ones for each faculty of an institution with a coordinating chair for the whole institution. The team always

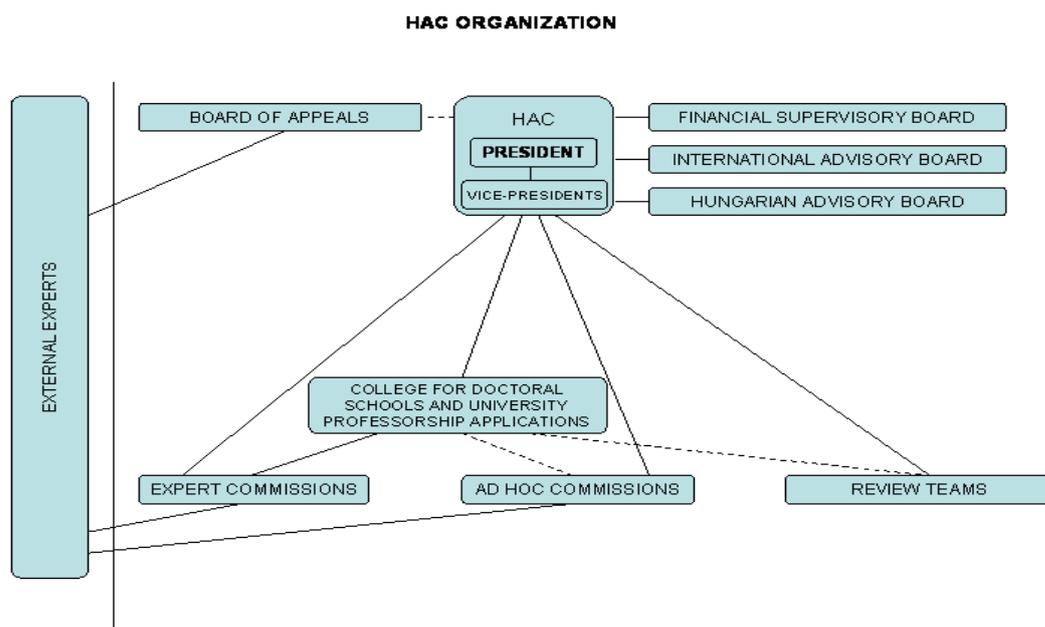
involves a quality assurance expert and a student. The team prepares an evaluation report. The faculty reports are accumulated into an institutional report. This report is sent to the rector of the evaluated institution for factual comment, and finally goes to the plenary with the rector’s comment for the final vote on the accreditation decision. The plenary may also make changes to the final report.

For ex post parallel disciplinary evaluation and accreditation procedures, which examine an entire discipline on all levels at all institutions where it is taught in the country within a short time-span, a pool of reviewers with expertise in the given discipline and including a student 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 teaching places, with proposals for an accreditation decisions for each place and level. The report is discussed by the HAC’s expert committee for the discipline, then passed on to the plenary.

Meeting documents are sent to HAC members a week before the plenary session.

Table 6: HAC Organization Chart

Organization chart



7.3.5. Advisory boards

In addition to the Financial Supervisory Board and the Board of Appeals, the HAC has an International Advisory Board, currently with six renowned authorities on higher education

and quality assurance from different European countries.²⁶ A Hungarian Advisory Board was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, reestablished in 2012 with members from business and industry.²⁷

7.3.6. Secretariat

Next to the Secretary General, his deputy and a Financial Director, the secretariat has a staff of eight program officers, five of them part-time, four administrative staff and one IT officer. The Deputy Secretary General carries a full load of program officer work while the Secretary General assists in institutional reviews on occasion. The program officers are assigned expert committees whose work they prepare and assist from inception to completion of the report. In addition they are responsible for several institutions, prepare and participate in site-visits and assist in writing/editing the accreditation report. The daily routine involves desk work on computers with Internet access, contacting and providing information for HAC and external committee members and evaluators as well as the public at large via telephone and e-mail. In line with legal regulations, staff members work in accordance with job descriptions.

Each year, the HAC president and the Secretary General submit detailed progress reports to the HAC membership. After the HAC approval of these reports a summary report in English appears on the website.²⁸

7.4. Financing

The Government Decree stipulates that “the financial coverage necessary of the HAC’s operations” are within the Ministry budget, in its own section of the financial plan. The decree also declares that the HAC President has full discretion over the budget.

The table indicates the HAC’s budget from 2010, with the 2013 figure promised by the Ministry. Own income is from applications for new programs and university professorships and includes bank interest.

Table 7: HAC budget 2010-2013²⁹

Year	State budget allocation in million HUF	State budget allocation in Euros	Own income in million HUF	Own income in Euros	Total in Euros
2009	245.5	901 149	61.0	223 911	1 125 060
2010	155	541 076	43.1	150 457	691 533
2011	126.9	461 918	22.3	83 958	545 876
2012	61.9	214 766	51.2	177 642	392 408
2013 (pledged)	154	(~523 800)			

²⁶ The membership of the International Advisory Board can be found on the website at www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en. A list of all Boards since 1995 is in the Appendices

²⁷ The membership of the Hungarian Advisory Board can be found on the website at www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en

²⁸ www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=226&Itemid=696&lang=en

²⁹ HUF-EUR exchange rate as of end of June each year, and March 2013

7.5. International activities

In spite of to the long-standing budget constraints, the HAC's international activities have been one of its strengths since its inception. The HAC has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2000. It 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). András Róna-Tas, the founder and first president of the HAC, has been on the Board of all three bodies and chaired the latter. The current secretary general, Tibor Szántó, was a board member in INQAAHE between 2004-2007 and, also from 2004 on served two terms as a member of the board of ENQA as well as being vice-president of the organization between 2007-2010. The HAC's program officer for foreign affairs, Christina Rozsnyai, acts as secretary general of CEENQA since its foundation. She served on the board of the European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Program, is member of the Accreditation Commission FAK-INST of FIBAA, Germany and member of the Board of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria. The HAC's first president, András Róna-Tas, was very active in international quality assurance and among the other past presidents, György Bazsa participated in international reviews and projects. Tibor Szántó and Christina Rozsnyai also participate in international projects (e.g. a coordinator for TEEP II, holding a training seminar in Albania, helping in refining the quality assurance system in Croatia) and are trained ENQA team review experts having participated in some agency reviews. 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 programs in Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, and Kosovo, some of them several times.

8. Self-evaluation of HAC compliance with ENQA membership criteria, including the ESG

ENQA criterion 1 / ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes and ENQA criterion 1 / ESG 3.1, 3.3: Activities

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

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

The HAC has been conducting external quality assurance (accreditation) procedures from its inception, both on the institutional and program levels (see **Chapter 6** above).

With the introduction of the 2011 Higher Education Act, the HAC is charged with “promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the scientific quality of higher education, scientific

research, and the quality of artistic creation, which participates under this Act in procedures relating to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctorate schools.” (Section 70 (1)). (As opposed to the previous one, the new Act does not include institutional and program accreditation as HAC tasks.) Derived from the Act, the Government Decree was produced in consultation with the HAC to link its activities with the ESG. In §2 (2) it determines that the HAC, as a body of experts, conducts its activities in line with the ESG. The HAC then composed its draft By-Laws on this basis and included the key features of its activities (see **Chapter 6.1**), which were approved by the Minister and published in the *Educational Gazette*.

It is evident that the recent changes in the legal framework and the speed with which the secondary legislation had to be developed have tied down the energies of the HAC in the past months. The fact that applications are now submitted to the Educational Authority, which forwards them to the HAC with the request for its expert opinion, and which operates under its own legal framework, has an impact on the HAC, both internally and in relation to higher education institutions.

With ongoing negotiations, the HAC seeks to continue its basic activities in the manner that they were developed and honed over two decades. One of the contentious issues has been whether to conduct ex post institutional and program accreditation as HAC procedures conducted up till now. The legislation, most explicitly the Government Decree §22-23, specifies only that the HAC produces expert opinions for the Educational Authority for

- issuing operating licenses for higher education institutions
- reviewing operating licenses
- issuing operating licenses for bachelor and master programs and for their “control”³⁰,
- establishing and discontinuing doctoral schools.

The Ministry position – shared by the Educational Authority – is that the HAC should conduct ongoing institutional evaluations that incorporate opinions on all of their programs and this should be done as part of the Educational Authority procedure reviewing the operating licenses of HEIs. However, with the acceptance of the By-Laws the legal foundation should have been clarified and the HAC wishes to carry on its institutional accreditation procedures in line with the By-Laws and the HAC’s 5-year schedule 2010/11-2014/15. Nevertheless, there are institutions that question the legality of the HAC initiating the current institutional accreditation procedure in 2012/13, arguing that only the Educational Authority has the right to initiate it. The HAC argues that the existing accreditation time-limits are running out and that the current round had to be started in order to meet the deadlines. This discussion was not settled at the time of this writing, when the briefing for institutional representatives for the upcoming round took place. The HEIs are in the process of writing their self-evaluation reports nonetheless.

The Higher Education Act states that the Educational Authority “shall review operating licenses every five years” (Section 8 (2)). The HAC, therefore, continues its five-year

³⁰ The Hungarian term “ellenőrzés” can be translated as “checking, controlling, monitoring, supervision.”

evaluation cycles, which is also in line with existing accreditation time limits. Therefore, discussions are going on on how to coordinate the procedures of the two organizations.

For each of its procedures, the HAC has guidelines and evaluation and accreditation criteria, published on its website. Both institutional and program ex post procedures emphasize the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the institution. In addition, they distinguish between the threshold requirements that need to be met to receive accreditation and further quality indicators and quality assurance measures that the HAC evaluates. HAC reports in ex post procedures always include analyses and recommendations of established practices. This approach also entails that there are accreditation standards while the evaluation part is based on quality judgments of the peer reviewers on the basis of information requested in self-evaluation guidelines.

All guidebooks begin by describing the HAC's processes and principles for evaluation and accreditation. While stressing that higher education institutions are primarily responsible for their own quality and quality assurance, the HAC's guidebook for institutional accreditation describes what aspects of an institution are to be evaluated, i.e. what the self-evaluation report should cover. These are a description and figures on

- teaching
- research and development or creative artistic activity
- financial management
- internal quality assurance (following the ESG)

In program accreditation, the standards are the same as for ex ante evaluation, namely the minimum requirements for a degree program. In ex post procedures, the HAC additionally examines the internal quality assurance mechanism for the entire educational process of a given degree program, developed on the basis of the ESG (e.g. curriculum development, teaching evaluation at departmental meetings, student evaluations of teaching and satisfaction surveys, staff satisfaction surveys, classroom reviews of teaching performance, etc.). For the parallel evaluation of degree programs in a given discipline each external evaluation team works out an additional set of criteria for the discipline on top of the provided common framework.

While ex post evaluations concentrate on processes and outputs, ex ante evaluations are chiefly input-focused. In ex ante procedures, the minimum requirements for program accreditation encompass the criteria set down in the law on the one hand, and additional quality criteria developed by the HAC. The HAC criteria encompass chiefly the number of ECTS for curricular units and the curricular structure, suitability for qualification levels, the qualifications of the academic staff, student assessment of learning, teaching and research infrastructure.³¹ In addition, the ex ante evaluation/accreditation of bachelor and master programs and of doctoral schools focuses on the academic/professional content, academic staff quality and infrastructural aspects. With doctoral schools their internal quality assurance mechanism are also examined.

³¹ Available at www.mab.hu under “Beadványok [Applications]/Bírálati Útmutató [Evaluation Criteria]”

As noted earlier, the HAC has recently been given the additional charge of evaluating new VET programs. The relevant government decree³² was issued only in August 2012, without being specified in the preceding legislation. The HAC set up an expert committee and worked out the procedures and criteria for evaluation. Although the fast-track development of the education and outcome requirements was supposed to be completed in September, they came out only in November and the HAC officially received the first submissions only on December 18th. (Electronic versions of the applications were uploaded by the Educational Authority in the HAC TIR database from end of November on.) In order to meet the deadline when the programs had to be publicly announced, so that students can enroll in September 2013, the 230 program applications were evaluated by the HAC in December 2012 and January 2013. This may sound as mission impossible but the HAC did all in its power to ensure that its evaluations were done appropriately to its quality requirements.

They will be evaluated ex post in five year cycles, probably within the framework of disciplinary program accreditation procedures. A number of problems can be foreseen, related to the speedy implementation of these programs. One came out right at the beginning of the HAC evaluation process.

The ex ante and ex post evaluation and accreditation of doctoral schools have traditionally been a cornerstone of the HAC's activities in relation to the quality assurance of universities, on the conviction that the quality of third-cycle programs reflects the quality of a university's research potential. Until the 2011 Higher Education Act, the HAC had decision-making rights in this area and no doctoral school could operate without the HAC's support. With the new law, the Minister has the authority to overrule the HAC's opinion if the institution appeals the HAC's decision.

The final major activity of the HAC, as described in **Chapter 6.4**, is the evaluation of applications for university professor positions. The benchmarks for university professorship accreditation are set down in the higher education law and the pertaining HAC guidelines, which contain the accreditation standards and criteria. This is the one area where the Minister is obligated by law to request a second opinion from the HAC if the rector does not agree with its decision. However, "if the rector's proposal and the expert opinion of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee are incongruous, the Minister may, at his/her discretion, initiate the appointment of the university professor" (Act Section 69 (3)).

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

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

The law³³ distinguishes between colleges and universities, with only the latter having the authorization to conduct doctoral education and issue Ph.D. degrees, in addition to some other

³² Government Decree 230/2012 (VIII.28) on higher education vocational training

³³ Higher Education Act, Section 9

distinctions. There is no distinction in the law regarding the nature of bachelor or master programs.

The HAC's tasks include checking whether the institution complies with the legal framework. All the procedures, guidelines and criteria for evaluation and accreditation are accessible from the HAC Hungarian website, with a select few also in English. They are divided into two subsets, applications for new programs (ex ante evaluation/accreditation) or entities, and accreditation of running ones (ex post accreditation).

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

Beyond that, the HAC has tried to consult with stakeholders in working out its criteria and procedures in specific cases. The Hungarian Rectors' Conference was asked to comment on the draft documents for ex ante evaluation/accreditation when the bachelor and master programs were introduced in 2005. Similarly, when the university professorship criteria were revised in 2007, the Rectors' Conference, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Higher Education and Research Council were consulted.

Since then, the HAC has updated all its guidelines to include the new legal requirements and, more importantly, has streamlined them to make them more user-friendly and comprehensible, in response to feedback from its stakeholders. Feedback is solicited in the annual surveys to evaluated institutions and programs and the peer reviewers. Informal feedback is ongoing through personal contact with institutions and experts.

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

The criteria for all evaluations and accreditation conducted by the HAC are explicit and are published on the HAC's website, both as HAC resolutions and in full for each type of procedure.

The procedures for ex ante evaluation of institutions or degree and VET programs as well as for evaluating university professorial positions have three documents for the evaluation procedure:

- guidelines for HEIs
- criteria for evaluation
- evaluation form for experts.

There are additional guidelines for joint programs, to be applied in tandem with the program guidelines and criteria. The same is true for foreign higher education institutions operating in Hungary.

Doctoral schools have a description of the procedure and criteria for evaluation, which cover both ex ante and ex post procedures.

For ex post accreditation the same core criteria apply as for ex ante procedures. They are incorporated or referred to in the ex post documents. For institutions there are self-evaluation guidelines and evaluation criteria, intended for both the institution and peer reviewers, and a separate handbook for peer reviewers, and there are additional self-evaluation guidelines and principles for denominational institutions. For programs to be evaluated in disciplinary groups there is a document describing the procedure, guidelines (with a core description and criteria from which the various disciplinary expert committees develop their set of criteria) and a separate handbook for peer reviewers.

The various documents have, as noted earlier, evolved over time, which may explain why there are a variety of formats. Still, within a given type of procedure the documents and approaches are consistent.

On the other hand there is arguably varying consistency in applying the criteria, both between the various expert groups and in the plenary, which is a definite weakness of the HAC. Solving this problem is not made any easier by the fact that in the expert opinion of the HAC, not only measurable factors are considered. The reliance on experts hinges on the assumption that their personal judgment contributes to their evaluation of quality. Different expert committees' judgments may also vary as they reflect on the peculiarities of the given discipline. The decision-making hierarchy from HAC expert committees to the plenary is intended to balance out inconsistencies.

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

As noted, the various items the HAC evaluates have their own criteria and procedures. Further differentiation are special issues, such as distance education programs, denominational institutions and programs, or foreign institutions, which all have separate, or rather additional criteria for accreditation. Colleges and universities have different requirements set in the Higher Education Act, and criteria and peer review teams are tailored to the type of institution that is to be evaluated.

There are no separate guidelines for the selection of experts beyond the guidelines and procedures set down in the HAC's By-Laws. With ex ante applications, the chairperson of the HAC's expert committee is the sole decision-maker in selecting evaluators (here evaluations are paper-based). With ex post procedures, the chairperson of the review team is proposed by the HAC president in consultation with members. The chairperson nominates the review team members who are approved by the plenary. For institutional or program review visits the institution has the right to object to the team members if there is a conflict of interest.

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

Provisions for briefing experts participating in visiting teams are in place. There are seminars for experts designated for upcoming visits held once a year. In addition, there are briefing meetings prior to the visit, where the review team, together with the program officer in charge, discusses the division of tasks. A discussion of the self-evaluation report is also

expected but not all team chairs, who lead the briefings, have been emphasizing it in detail. To correct this, staff members are instructed to ensure that this is addressed at the briefings.

The HAC's philosophy and approach to quality assurance are part of the briefing and are elaborated in more detail in the guidebook. One member of review teams has to be a quality assurance expert.

Contrary to *ex post* evaluations, in *ex ante* procedures, there is no organized training for experts involved beyond the evaluation forms (templates) and other written documents. This is, again, a weakness of the HAC even though the number of experts (more than 1500) does not make it very easy to organize such trainings.

Greater use of international experts would be desirable but is currently unattainable. This is due in part to budget constraints and in part to language issues, but there is also some resistance against it on the part of higher education. International experts are invited chiefly in subjects where not enough competent Hungarian experts can be found who have no conflict of interest in the given review, e.g. the accreditation of denominational institutions. Students are invited to participate in visits conducted for institutional accreditation and for parallel, disciplinary program accreditation. Invitation is done solely through the National Union of Students in Hungary and the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. Students.

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

Reports on institutional accreditation are elaborate and the HAC is not aware of complaints about their comprehensibility, though their style necessarily varies according to their authors. There is a template for accreditation reports. They are published in full on the HAC's website. Disciplinary accreditation reports are equally elaborate and include an extensive analysis of the given field at the time of the review. They have been published in print in separate volumes and are also accessible through the website. All types of reports are written under the auspices of the chair of the group. They include the visiting team or expert committee's input, the degree of which varies depending on the working style of the group. In each case, a standard format is provided and a program officer on the staff is responsible for editing the report. After the draft is finished, the Deputy Secretary General and/or program officer responsible for institutional accreditation and/or Secretary General read the reports to check for consistency and evidence for findings. Ex post evaluation reports are published on the HAC website. (Ex ante accreditation decisions, with the exception of those on professorial positions, are accessible on the website in the form of the HAC resolution and its explanation.)

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

Ex ante evaluation does not set an accreditation deadline, being merely a support or non-support decision. With positive opinions, the HAC may add comments to improve minor

weaknesses or may require a monitor procedure. Applications that are not supported are provided with reasons for the decision. In these cases, institutions may submit new applications and start a new procedure. Quality enhancement comments are usually acted on by the given program (HEI) while monitor procedures are conducted by HAC.

Ex post accreditation is conducted in five year intervals. A positive accreditation decision may contain a request for actions and a specific action plan in response to the HAC's findings. A deadline is specified when the HAC will examine the action plan and also the concrete actions taken. This may be done based only on a submitted document or the HAC may decide to verify them in a site visit. Each ex post accreditation examines progress with respect to weaknesses identified in the previous accreditation report. If the HAC continues to find quality concerns it may revoke accreditation. As a consequence, the Educational Authority may revoke its license.

The procedure and possible outcomes of the HAC's decisions are described in the relevant guidelines. This ensures that the review teams include follow-up analyses in their reports, which is also checked by the program officer assigned to the review.

General follow-up meetings are planned to be held as part of the third round of the ex post institutional accreditation procedure. These meetings are scheduled for the middle of the 5-year cycle with the first such meeting to be organized in 2013 (although negotiations with the Educational Authority and the Ministry on the future of institutional accreditation are pending).

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

Initially the HAC conducted ex post accreditation procedures in eight-year cycles, which were changed to five-year cycle in 2010. The HAC prepared the schedule of the third round of institutional accreditation in 2010. It is available on the HAC website since then so that HEIs know well in advance when exactly their own procedure is due.³⁴

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

The HAC makes most of its publications available on the website. They include

- Reports on the quality of higher education (irregular)
- The *Quality Gazette*, containing the HAC's decisions and major issues discussed (three issues per year)
- Yearbook (in Hungarian, annually) and special issues on particular subjects
- Annual Reports (in English)
- Other publications (either in Hungarian or in English).

³⁴ http://www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=347&Itemid=781&lang=hu

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

Disciplinary program accreditation reports contain not only the accreditation decisions and explanations for each field and site evaluated but an in-depth analysis of the evaluated discipline. They are issued in hardcopy and through the website.

The HAC has a number of measures in place to review its procedures and activities, such as its annual surveys for participants in preceding institutional and disciplinary program evaluations, and meetings two years after institutional evaluations with institutional representatives to discuss findings and follow-up actions.

A related constraint is that while students applying for study at a higher education institution are very well aware that they can do so only for programs that are published with the approval of the Ministry / Educational Authority in the annual higher education catalog, the catalog does not list the accreditation status of a program. Consequently, there is little public awareness about the significance or nature of accreditation. Moreover, the HAC does not have the resources to raise awareness about the value of accreditation to the general public, which learns about the HAC at most via the media in response to complaints about negative decisions.

ENQA criterion 2 / ESG 3.2: Official status

Official status: Agencies should be formally recognized by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate

The HAC operates on the basis of the Higher Education Act CLXXV of 2011, principally Sections 70-71, with other parts of the law also applicable.

Section 70 (3) sets down the official status of the agency where it says, “The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is authorized to acquire a non-profit legal status regulated in the Act on the Rights of Association, non-profit status and the operation and funding of Civil Organizations.”

In addition, there is a separate government decree (19/2012 (II.22)) on higher education quality assurance and enhancement, which legislates the HAC’s status and activities.

For the full list of laws and regulations governing the HAC please see **Chapter 6.1** on “The HAC and higher education accreditation in Hungary.”

ENQA criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organize and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective

and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes, procedures and staff

The lack of resources has been mentioned several times in this report, reflected in the budget overview in **Chapter 7.4**.

Although being aware of the country's prevailing financial situation, the HAC considers the shortage of financial resources to have been one of the principal constraints in all its operations over a number of years. It makes itself felt in a shortage of staff, down from 20.75 full-time equivalent positions in 2006 to the current 13.75. Hence several program officers and the secretariat leadership work considerable overtime, without compensation. Of the 16 staff members six work as pensioners and five are employed part-time, some due to budget constraints. To balance the stagnating wages staff is granted time allotment during working hours for English-language or exercise classes. The given financial resources result in endangering infrastructural developments.

Just as critically, lack of resources precludes serious analyses about the effects of the HAC's actions and decisions or research on developmental options. International activities are limited to those that are reimbursed by the inviting party.

The annual budget tug-of-war with the Ministry has become a *modus vivendi*. With previous laws the HAC's budget was fixed at 0.2% of the higher education budget but the annual budget laws always overrode the Higher Education Act. Now the new Government Decree (19/2012. (II. 22.)) regulates financing for the HAC, stating in § 4 (2) that it is a separate item in the budget of the Ministry. The *de facto* allocation in 2012 (less than half of what it has been in 2011) has seriously threatened the quality work and the independent existence of the HAC. It has been able to survive the year only by exhausting its financial reserves. The HAC has drawn additional income from applications for new programs, which added 51.2 m HUF to the full budget in 2012. A new government decree on fees in HE administration procedures has just been issued and will be in effect from March 16, 2013 on. Fees for HAC evaluation activities will be raised but the number of various applications to be evaluated decreases. For 2013, there is promise from the Ministry that the budget is to be raised considerably compared to 2012. In late February 2013 the HAC received the fees for the 230 new VET program applications. That has relieved the acute shortage caused by the 2012 budget and allowed the agency to stay afloat for another month or so.

HAC relocated to new offices in the summer of 2010 and negotiated roughly equal conditions as in the previous, less adequate premises when that lease had expired. The current lease is expiring in the summer of 2013 and with budget issues unclear it is bracing for the need to move again. The current office space was calibrated to four persons more than the current staff, so that a smaller facility in the building is one of the options.

ENQA criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement

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

The mission statement was discussed in **Chapter 7.1** above.

ENQA criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence

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

While the earlier higher education act declared the HAC to be “an independent body of experts,” the currently effective law left it to the Government Decree (19/2012. (II. 22.) §4 (1)) following negotiations between the Ministry and the HAC) to specify that the HAC is an independent organization.

At the time of this writing, the independence of the HAC within the Hungarian higher education landscape is uncertain. While it is true that its decisions are not directly influenced by the Ministry or any political entity, its authority, charge and scope are tentative. While the Educational Authority has promised not to override the HAC’s decisions, this was overturned with the VET programs (42 such cases in January 2013). With the extreme time constraints for decisions on new applications, the HAC’s pertinent expert commission and staff worked overtime and during the Christmas holiday season to meet the deadlines (shortened at the Ministry’s request), but due to a dispute on how to count the theoretical to practical work ratio in the curricula, and some other issues, the Educational Authority did not accept the HAC’s quality decisions and has granted license to most of the applications. (In spite of its request the HAC has not received information on, or copies of, the licensing resolutions of the Educational Authority. The HAC learned from the Internet that 42 not-supported programs are offered for enrollment, that is, they are licensed.)

The question on resources was mentioned in the previous chapter, shedding light on the question of financial independence of HAC. The delegation of half the HAC members by the Minister and the selection of the President are additional concerns in this context, even if in practice HAC members have taken their independence in making decisions very seriously. The fact that the HAC’s expert opinion is legislated as part of a license-granting process is disruptive to the HAC’s operations and actions. Such reservations have been corroborated when, at a recent information forum for institutions scheduled for the upcoming round of institutional accreditation, some of them questioned the HAC’s right to initiate institutional accreditation at all.

As far as independence from evaluated colleges and universities is concerned, the law prohibits rectors from being appointed to HAC membership but of course most members work at higher education institutions. To avoid conflicts of interest in case-by-case decisions in the HAC, it issued a Code of Ethics in 2001. Moreover, the HAC set up an Ethics Committee early on, which has discussed two cases over the past 12 years. HAC members are asked to sign no-conflict-of-interest declarations on taking up their membership and the same is true for standing expert committee members. External evaluators are asked to sign a confidentiality clause in their contracts.

External evaluators in ex ante procedures remain anonymous throughout the entire evaluation process; only the expert committee chair nominating them and program officer in charge know their identity. Their evaluations are not public, but on request the HAC president sends them anonymously to the institution. (It is not quite clear whether or not this practice can be carried on under the new legal regulations since the HAC is not in direct contact with HEIs in the new procedures.)

All HAC and expert committee members are listed on the HAC website, as are ex post review team evaluators who are listed in the accreditation reports.

It can thus be said that the HAC's decisions are, as such, taken autonomously and independently, or, where infringements come to light, the HAC has the procedures in place to deal with them. Nevertheless, there have been some cases when external (HEI or Ministry) pressures were felt, but which the HAC and its successive presidents have stood firm. Moreover, the “small country effect” is inevitable and as a result, decisions are occasionally tinged with presumable institutional interests. To counter it, it would be desirable to involve a larger number of foreign experts. Language constraints are one obstacle in this regard, but also resistance from higher education institutions budget constraints have stood in the way of this and preclude it in the foreseeable future.

The previous HAC president launched in 2008 what in rough translation would be “Clean Slate HAC”, an e-mail address where anyone could write in thoughts, complaints, ethical suspicions or any other issues. The letters were read solely by the HAC president who asked that the authors identify themselves, while the president, in turn, guaranteed their anonymity. This has led to several discussions between the former president and complainants. Though this opportunity is still open, the new president retained the e-mail address, there have been no complaints to him through this channel in the past year.

ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members

External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- *a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;*
- *an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the HAC;*
- *publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes; a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report*

The HAC has predefined criteria and procedures in place, which are accessible on its website in all cases. For ex post accreditation, the HAC proceeds along the standard procedures: the institution or program submits a self-evaluation report; visiting teams of HAC members and external experts, including a student, conduct site visits following the HAC's elaborate guidelines; the visiting teams produce reports which are discussed in the appropriate expert



committees of the HAC (in case of program accreditation) and the HAC plenum, which passes a resolution with the decision; and the final report, with analyses and recommendations for improvement, is published. The accreditation decision may specify a follow-up procedure with concrete measures that the institution or program should take, which will be checked by HAC at a specified deadline. Since 2007, the HAC has been issuing a certificate of accreditation for successful ex post institutional accreditation. Usually, the HAC is invited to present the certificate to the institution in a festive ceremony.

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

Follow-up procedures involve required actions and or action plans institutions or programs must carry out by a set deadline, which are reviewed by the HAC either in a report only or coupled with a monitoring site-visit.

Another follow-up procedure is the follow-up meeting, held two years after the institutional accreditation procedure, for which the HAC invites representatives of the institutions evaluated together with person responsible for the institution's internal quality assurance to discuss the findings, outcomes and institutional follow-up measures in the procedure. (See also the section on **ESG 2.6** above.)

ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures

Accountability procedures: Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability, including a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years, which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA

The HAC has from time to time produced various analyses and overviews related to its quality assurance. A quality policy document containing a coherent quality assurance package was adopted by the HAC in December 2007. It was put on the HAC website in spring 2008 also in English and has been adapted in 2013.

The HAC regularly collects surveys to review team members as well as institutional and faculty leaders after they have taken part in institutional evaluations and disciplinary program evaluations. Somewhat less regularly, SWOT and satisfaction surveys are conducted among HAC staff. A separate menu item on internal quality assurance appears on the HAC's website. A few times in the past and also in preparation for the current self-evaluation, HAC members were invited to answer a SWOT questionnaire about the HAC. The results of the latter are summarized in the SWOT analysis in **Chapter 10** below.

The International Advisory Board is an important sounding board for the work of the HAC. At the annual meetings, the Board reviews the HAC's activities in the past year and makes recommendations. The HAC's actions in response to them are discussed in the following year. In addition, the HAC requests the opinion of Board members on major issues throughout the year. Their comments were included into this self-evaluation report.

Regarding financial transparency, there is a Financial Supervisory Board set up in accordance with the law for public benefit organizations. Such a board has been operating since the second half of 2006. It reviews and analyzes the HAC's financial operations at least once a year. As a public benefit organization, the HAC has its balance sheets audited by an independent auditor. Moreover, financing channeled through the Ministry requires the HAC to present a summary financial report to the Ministry each year, not just with the recent law but also earlier. The acceptance of the report is a precondition for the next year's budget allocation.

The internal reflection mechanisms consist of discussion of the survey results in the plenary and actions. Staff survey results are discussed at regular staff meetings. The current workload leaves increasingly little time both at the HAC plenary and for the staff to reflect on its work. However, staff meetings are held about every two weeks as well or when specific issues have to be discussed.

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

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

i. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups;

ii. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency;

iii. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA

The HAC believes that over its twenty-year history it has honed its principles regarding quality assurance and the procedures it applies to conduct external evaluations and to pass judgments. The one clear statement that appears in the periodic surveys returned by evaluated institutions and by peer reviewers is the acknowledgement of the professionalism of the HAC and its staff in following and supporting the evaluation procedures.

The HAC's internal quality assurance documentation, accessible on the website, encompasses the following:

- The HAC's quality assurance policy document, including its mission statement
- "Clean Slate HAC"
- External evaluation 1999-2000

- External evaluation 2007-2008
- Surveys from external stakeholders and the summaries of their results going back to 2005
- Surveys from internal stakeholders and the summaries of their results going back to 2003.

As noted, the HAC conducts regular surveys with external and internal stakeholders. The responses of the latter are reflected in the SWOT analysis in **Chapter 10**. The last surveys the HAC has conducted involved the institutions evaluated in 2012 and their peer review team members. A summary of their responses was discussed at the HAC plenary meeting on December 7, 2012. Another round went to institutions whose programs underwent disciplinary accreditation procedures in 2012 and to their review team members. These results were discussed at the February 1, 2013 plenary. A third set of survey went to the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, whose responses were also discussed at the February 1 plenary. They are posted (in Hungarian) on the HAC website. While the majority of comments pertain to specifics in the guidelines and procedures, the main, recurring points concerning the HAC are,

- authorization to operate set into law, but independence should be strengthened through dependable financing
- independent in its decision-making, with qualified and committed experts but employers and foreign experts should be invited
- threat to independence, delegation of members by Minister, members can be recalled without explanation, president not elected by members but named by Minister
- processes honed and streamlined over twenty years, based on international experience, standards and practice, and common nationally
- processes clear and practicable to some and confusing to others
- decisions are published
- qualified and committed staff, exact and effective administration, but insufficient for tasks
- procedures formally under Educational Authority, part of licensing procedure, accreditation not legislated
- government control may result in processes becoming overly bureaucratic
- members dominantly represent universities and the Academy of Sciences, less colleges and no stakeholders or foreign experts
- procedures change too frequently and are rigid in some cases, e.g. joint programs
- sometimes decisions are stereotypical, without enough information about true weaknesses, decisions ought to be based on more objective measurements
- some experts' judgments are biased
- and a recurring comment: too little time for/during site visits.

As a rule, the HAC discusses the annual surveys in its plenary meetings and subsequently those points that are considered useful are worked into the Guidebooks and procedures when

they are updated. That is done intermittently, either when the legal conditions change or when feedback on specific points is significant.

Another internal quality assurance measure is the International Advisory Board and its annual recommendations. They, too, are posted on the website. Annually, the HAC presents the actions taken following the previous recommendations and these, again, are discussed at the annual meetings.

The Hungarian Advisory Board has met less frequently. Their feedback concerns the impact of the HAC's work in the Hungarian employment market. No formal recommendations have been issued.

As concerns consistency in judgments, in institutional and disciplinary program accreditation, where site visits are conducted, the written reports that provide the evidence for the HAC's accreditation decisions are detailed and extensive. In the paper-based ex ante evaluations there is a degree of inconsistency. Some evaluators elaborate their recommendation for the evaluation decision not in enough detail, thereby not providing enough explanation to support a decision. Always two evaluators are required and the expert committee chair may choose to invite a third one if the previous two evaluations differed substantially. The decision-making hierarchy allows for each higher-level body to override the earlier subcommittee's decision, though sometimes without sufficiently elaborating why the original decision was changed.

The ex post accreditation decisions always are accompanied by extensive reports with recommendations for improvement and, in most cases, follow-up requirements (see ESG 2.6).

The questions in how far the decisions of the HAC are formal is open at this point, given that the legal authority, at the time of this writing, is to produce opinions on quality on request of the Educational Authority. The legislation stipulates that appeals against the HAC's decisions may be lodged before the Educational Authority or the Minister, depending on the issue, who request the HAC's Board of Appeals to review the HAC decision. Nevertheless, based on its past practice and aware of international quality assurance standards, the HAC publishes its accreditation reports on its website, in addition to sending them to the evaluated institution. In this sense, its findings are public and as such they carry consequences. It follows, that the possibility for the evaluated entity to object to the findings must be made possible in an appeals procedure. Therefore, the newly set up Board of Appeals, which works independently from the HAC with a program officer trained in law, has discussed disputed evaluations. Of 16 appeals (13 on university professor positions, two on new master's programs and one new bachelor program), two (on university professorships) were substantiated by the Board between December 2012 and February 2013 (this including the backlog of appeals from the time the previous Board's term ended. On the issue of appeals, please see also earlier parts of this report, mainly in **Chapters 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 7.3.2**).

The HAC's international activities, described in detail in **Chapter 7.5**, are one of the agency's strengths. In spite of the enduring lack of resources, the HAC has been involved in major European projects and sat or sits on international committees. Two former presidents, a former HAC member, and two HAC staff members have taken part in ENQA training workshops and have participated as panel members or secretaries in agency reviews. The resulting awareness of international good practice and developmental trends has, and continues to, feed back into the principles and practices of the HAC. It is, however, a

weakness in this regard that international developments remain predominantly at the level of the Secretariat, with little feedback to the membership; with the high number of decisions at each plenary meeting there is rarely time to discuss international trends at these meetings. Due to this constraint, a former, albeit intermittent, practice that those HAC members who had participated as invited experts in foreign reviews reported back to the HAC plenary on their experiences has faded out.

9. 2010 Progress Report: Actions taken on recommendations in the 2008 external evaluation³⁵ of the HAC

Following the 2008 external ENQA review, the HAC produced an action plan on 24 July 2008, which was debated by the HAC International Advisory Board at its meeting on 23-24 November 2011. Subsequently, the HAC discussed an action paper at its plenary meeting in February 2009, with specific responsibilities and timelines. A progress report was passed by the HAC plenary on 1 October 2010 and submitted to ENQA on 6 October 2010. HAC sent a clarification requested by ENQA on 22 December of that year, which ENQA accepted in its letter of 9 May 2011.

HAC progress report 2010

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee was externally evaluated by an international review panel in 2008. The review was coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Hungary. The review was a “type B” review according to the ENQA *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA*, that is, it focused not only on the ENQA membership criteria, and thereby the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG), but covered all areas of activity of the HAC and the Hungarian higher education accreditation system. Consequently, many of the recommendations made by the panel in the final review report do not pertain to the ENQA membership criteria / ESG but aim at enhancing the operation of the HAC and external QA of HE in Hungary in general.

In this document the HAC reports on measures taken as a follow-up to the recommendations of the external review report. Recommendations and follow-up measures that have direct relevance to the ENQA membership criteria / ESG are highlighted in gray.

For the sake of clarity we kept the numbering of the original chapter in the final evaluation report and the five groups of recommendations but we added a third level numbering for the individual recommendations instead of using the original bullet points formatting. *Recommendations are set in italics.*

9.1. Moving to an institutional, ex-post approach to quality

9.1.1. More focus on output, not only input

Taking into account the output elements of a given study program has been present in ex-post institutional accreditation since its very beginning in 1994/95 while it is *per definitionem* impossible as to ex-ante accreditation.

³⁵ <http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/hac/publications/HACrepFinal.pdf>, p. 21-22.

Follow-up measure: When specifying the methodological guidelines for, and in conducting program (disciplinary) accreditation in informatics, the HAC focused more on the output elements of the evaluated study programs. Preparations for the next disciplinary evaluation (all programs in agriculture) are in progress, with the same emphasis on output elements.

9.1.2. Move to ex-post, phasing out ex-ante evaluations and accreditation

Phasing out ex-ante accreditation would require the changing of national legislation.

Follow-up measure: The HAC considered the issue. Due to the fact that internal QA systems at Hungarian HEIs are still not robust enough for such a change, the HAC, in agreement with the *Hungarian Rectors' Conference* (HRC), did not propose changing the HEA in this respect. Once internal QA systems at HEIs are fully and effectively operating both on institutional and program levels, and this is demonstrated through institutional and programmatic accreditation, the issue of phasing out or terminating ex-ante program accreditation can be considered again. The HAC notes that its International Advisory Board agrees with retaining the ex-ante accreditation procedures for the time being.

9.1.3 Once the current mass of bachelor and master program accreditation is over, refocus on institutional approach, moving away from program approach, which can be maintained for ad hoc needs

Follow-up measure: The HAC considered the recommendation. Ex-post disciplinary program accreditation serves actually also as a follow-up of the ex-ante accreditations and as such, it is in harmony with the ESG. It is the HAC's considered opinion that, similarly to many other European countries, program accreditation still has its place in the system, as it is more suited to the general purpose of accreditation in the Hungarian context.

9.1.4 Encourage wider view of quality, not just academic content, as part of move towards institutional approach. This will involve matching of academic criteria and other elements of quality

Follow-up measure: An ad hoc committee including stakeholders (employers) was set up to investigate the issue and to prepare a proposal on what further elements of quality should be evaluated in institutional and program accreditation beyond the currently evaluated ones. It is the HAC's strong conviction that the quality of HE in general and of a study program in particular is basically determined by the academic content of education. Nevertheless, based on the proposals made by this ad hoc committee, the HAC will cover more elements related to the practical aspects of program quality, such as the success of graduates in the labor market and the general social and economic /labor market relevance of the given program. Moreover, feedback from labor market representatives will also be sought and evaluated in accreditation procedures.

9.1.5 This will also move towards greater follow-up of institutional issues

Follow-up measure: The HAC included a more precise follow-up procedure in the *Guidebook for Institutional Accreditation*. According to this, the HAC will check what measures were taken by the given HEI as a follow-up to the HAC's recommendations set down in its institutional accreditation report. This checking will have three major elements:

- Direct checking by correspondence and/or a site visit at a deadline specified in the accreditation report (usually after two years).
- Indirect checking by monitoring the HEI's annual reports (available on the HEI website) regarding the implementation of its quality development plan.
- A follow-up conference with the participation of HEIs evaluated in a given academic year. The follow-up conference will discuss follow-up reports by HEIs and it will be held in the third year after the given institution has undergone an accreditation procedure.

9.1.6 This will involve rethinking the composition of the HAC staff and structures

HAC program officers are equally trained for, and are taking part in, institutional and program accreditation activities. Moreover, there are no departments or units within the Secretariat. The distribution of work follows the disciplinary logic and by this, the committee structure of the HAC. However, if a future refocusing of HAC activities requires it, then possible changes in the composition and structure of the Secretariat will be considered.

No follow-up measure was needed for the time being.

9.1.7 HAC should then consider moving from an 8 year cycle to a 5 year cycle for institutional reviews

Follow-up measure: (HAC, Ministry of Education and Culture³⁶, Parliament) The length of the institutional accreditation cycle is determined by law. The HAC agreed to change the length of the cycle. The HEA was amended in 2009, changing the 8 year institutional accreditation cycle to 5 years. The HEA amendment contains reference to the recommendation of the external review panel.

9.2. Structure and operations of HAC

9.2.1 Start to think about decreasing the number of HAC members, increasing the variety within its membership:

- *more stakeholders,*
- *more students*
- *less academic representatives (universities and Hungarian Academy of Sciences)*
- *include international representatives*

³⁶ Its current name is Ministry of National Resources.

Follow-up measure: (Ministry of Education and Culture, Parliament) The number and the delegation procedures of members of HAC are determined by the HEA. The HEA was amended in 2009, reducing the number of HAC members from 29 to 19 and including one international member and one student member (a representative of the national student body, HÖOK). However, against the HAC's strong and repeated proposal, the national association of Ph.D. students (DOSZ) did not get the right to delegate a HAC member and thus, it is represented on the HAC plenary meetings only on an invitational basis.

9.2.2 *Students need voting rights in the HAC*

Follow-up measure: (Ministry of Education and Culture, Parliament) The HEA was amended in 2009, allowing the student member (see above) to vote in the HAC plenary meetings. The invited representative of the national association of Ph.D. students (DOSZ) has no voting right (as set down in the HEA).

9.2.3 *HAC Presidency should have more contacts with major external stakeholders (employers)*

Follow-up measure: For the meetings of the Hungarian Advisory Board of the HAC (consisting of major stakeholder and labor market representatives) all members of the Presidency have been invited. Moreover, the HAC has conveyed this Board more frequently than in the past, at least once a year. In September 2010 the Hungarian Board is holding a joint meeting with the HAC's International Advisory Board in order to provide mutual feedback for the HAC on its work.

9.2.4 *There is a need for improved internal staff communication at the HAC*

Follow-up measure: Beyond the distribution of information via e-mail and target group meetings, regular face-to-face all-staff meetings have been reintroduced at the Secretariat.

9.2.5 *Use Frascati manual to define major academic areas, and reduce the number of discipline committees, or remove all of them so that the current college structure takes this responsibility*

Follow-up measure: The number of disciplinary committees has been reduced from 20 (in the 2007/09 term) to 8 (in the 2010/12 term).

9.2.6 *The Chair of each visiting panel should report to Plenum when it is considering the final report from that visiting panel*

Follow-up measure: The HAC returned to its earlier practice, final institutional accreditation reports are presented to the HAC plenary by the chair of the respective Visiting Committee.

9.2.7 *Tidying up the report of the visiting panel and checking with laws and regulations should be the work of the HAC secretariat*

Follow-up measure: Tidying up the report of the visiting panel and checking with laws and regulations have actually been done by the respective program officers at the Secretariat in most cases. Following this recommendation, tidying up the report of the visiting panel and checking with laws and regulations have been done by the respective program officers at the Secretariat in all cases since Autumn 2008.

9.2.8 Whenever possible, ensure greater transparency, and develop the HAC communications policy with key stakeholders and wider public

Follow-up measures: In order to enhance the communication with stakeholders the HAC intensified its relationships as follows.

- Regular communication with the *Hungarian Rectors' Conference*, attendance of Presidents or other representatives at each others' plenary meetings, common statements on various higher education matters (e.g. on research universities).
- Meetings of the HAC, HRC and HERC (*Higher Education and Research Council*) Presidents and Secretary Generals respectively.
- Regular circulars to heads of doctoral schools and university doctoral councils.
- Regular HAC responses by the President in TV and radio interviews and the electronic and printed media to publications related to higher education QA issues
- E-mail replies by the President and Secretariat to queries.
- Work on renewal of the HAC website has begun.

9.2.9 Undertake more system-wide analytical work, using materials already available

Follow-up measures:

- The HAC prepared a system-wide analysis on the Bologna transition of study programs in Hungary, based on the ex-ante accreditation experience. The document was sent to the Minister of Education and Culture and other respective Ministry officials, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference and moreover, it was made available for the public at large on the HAC website (in Hungarian, <http://web.mab.hu/mab/doc/hatarozatok/elvi/90327szakrendH.doc>).
- The HAC published both in hard copy and electronically the final reports of the disciplinary evaluations in the fields of performing and applied arts. The reports also contain system-wide analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the respective fields. (in Hungarian, <http://www.mab.hu/doc/Jelentesek4.pdf>)

9.2.10 Build on the positive experience of a paper-less evaluation of doctoral schools, and move towards this paper-free approach in the other accreditation procedures

Follow-up measure: Beside the doctoral database, which is run jointly by the *National Doctoral Council* and the HAC, in 2009/10 the HAC created a web-based information system (available at <http://tir.mab.hu/>) and intends to develop it to a full-scale electronic system involving all the HAC evaluation and accreditation activities and information on

them. The system is being developed step by step by HAC staff. In its public part by now it contains all the HAC resolutions passed since June 2003 and information on the organization of HAC, including the database of HAC experts, 1190 persons as of September 2010. (Some personal data are not public but are accessible to HAC members and staff.) Paper-less evaluations in the area of ex-ante accreditation of study programs are already being carried out via the new system.

9.2.11 Look at all possible options for rationalization of HAC processes, in order to reduce bureaucracy

Follow-up measure: In revising the institutional and program accreditation processes the HAC paid special attention to streamlining them. In the new accreditation procedures HAC requires a relatively short self-evaluation report which may be extended on request of the Visiting Committee. (See also follow-up measure 6.2.10 above.)

9.2.12 Include a greater focus on improvement in the HAC's external evaluation processes

Follow-up measure: On revising the *Guidebook for Institutional Accreditation* the HAC addressed this issue and described in more detail that the Visiting Committees should pay even more attention to improvement aspects and elaborate detailed and viable recommendations for the enhancement of internal QA at HEIs.

All institutional accreditation reports include recommendations for improvement.

9.2.13 Involve international experts in the external evaluation processes

Follow-up measure: The HAC Strategy Committee addressed the issue and found that there are two major factors hindering the regular involvement of foreign experts in evaluations, namely, the costs involving also the rather bureaucratic relevant financial regulations in Hungary on the one hand and the language issue on the other. Still, it was decided that the use of a selective approach is viable here. Based on this, in 2009/10 the HAC employed three Hungarian-speaking foreign experts in the disciplinary accreditation of music programs and one in the institutional accreditation of a church-run university. Another Hungarian-speaking foreign expert was employed by the HAC Appeals Committee.

9.2.1. Role of Minister

9.3.1 The power of the Minister to change the recommendation of HAC should be removed

Regulation concerning the Minister's role changed around the time of the external review process and the HAC thinks that the current regulation is appropriate. The HAC does not want to become a body making educational policy or state/governmental administrative decisions. The HEA provides the opportunity for the Minister not to follow the HAC recommendation only in appeals procedures. This, in our opinion, is in harmony with the ESG (see also 6.3.2.). However, clearer and more accessible information for prospective students on the accreditation status of individual degree programs is needed.

Follow-up measure: The HAC initiated that the accreditation status of each degree program be indicated in the annual *Guide for Admission to Higher Education (Felvételi Tájékoztató)*. This will be done from the 2011 edition on.

9.3.2 If this is not possible to change, then the Minister's detailed reasons for changing the recommendation should be made public and in writing

Follow-up measure: The HAC proposed an amendment to the HEA that the Minister should give detailed reasons in writing and in public when not following the HAC recommendations and accreditation decisions (which is common practice with accreditation and public administration decisions). Unfortunately, the proposal was not accepted by the Ministry of Education and Culture and thus, the HEA has not been amended in this respect.

9.3.3 This applies equally to the appointment of professors and to the approval of academic programs

Follow-up measure: See above.

9.2.2. On internal quality in institutions

9.4.1 HAC guidelines and procedures have improved considerably since 2000; it would now be useful to develop some stability in the process, and not change the procedures on an annual basis

The HAC did not change the institutional accreditation procedures themselves, it has only clarified some of the issues. (However, see also 6.1.5, 6.2.11, 6.2.12.)

No follow-up measure was needed.

9.4.2 Need to develop a culture of an open competition for professorships, with international advertising, search committee, international selection panel

Follow-up measure: This recommendation went far beyond the authority of the HAC. There is already an open competition since openings for professorships in Hungary have to be made public, albeit only in Hungarian (in the official *Gazette of Education*). The language of tuition in most cases is Hungarian, therefore we cannot really expect major interest from foreign instructors to come to Hungary and to teach in Hungarian. However, the HAC approached the Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the Ministry of Education and Culture with such a proposal but it was not received favorably.

9.4.3 Need to find possibilities to foster more joint programs both between Hungarian institutions and between Hungarian and foreign institutions

The HAC made public its accreditation requirements for joint programs. The problem here is that due to diploma recognition needs on the national level, the HEA prescribes that a foreign-Hungarian joint study program should correspond to a Hungarian one. (That is, it should be established as a Hungarian program if it still does not exist as

such.) As to joint programs between Hungarian institutions, the problem here is that Hungarian HEIs would like to create joint programs “adding up” their resources and capacities that are otherwise insufficient for running a program by one of the partners alone. This kind of co-operation does not result in real added value, which is one of the accreditation requirements for joint programs, therefore the HAC does not accredit such programs. Nevertheless, the HAC generally supports the idea of internationalization, an element of which can be the introduction of more and more joint programs in Hungary. The HAC however, does not feel that fostering of any special mode of education is its task.

Follow-up measure: The HAC has paid special attention to the ex-ante accreditation of joint programs and, without lowering its quality requirements. It has accredited 4 international joint programs in 2009/10, out of 6 applications.

9.4.4 It should be normal to prepare self-evaluation documentation in English, to allow international experts to participate in the process and to encourage international benchmarking

Preparing the self-evaluation documentation in English is still not a widespread practice in most countries in Europe. Although the HAC has much sympathy with this recommendation, it thinks that the introduction of such a measure can only be done gradually.

Follow-up measure: The HAC will discuss with HEIs in the 2010/11 institutional accreditation processes as to which of them is willing to prepare the self-evaluation report in English. The HAC will include at least one foreign expert in the respective Visiting Committee.

9.4.5 Need to develop the follow-up and monitoring systems by HEIs and by HAC on institutional and program indicators

Follow-up measure: The HAC’s Quality Development Committee investigated the issue of follow-up and monitoring, including the possible updating of relevant quality indicators. It summarized its opinion and compiled a list of indicators in a document, which it presented to the HAC Presidium. The HAC then decided to include a set of indicators in the *Guidebook for Institutional Accreditation* and review them on an annual basis.

9.2.3. Financing

9.5.1 Ministry should be more transparent regarding annual allocation

Follow-up measure: The President of the HAC discussed the issue with the Minister of Education and Culture in order to receive the state financing for 2009 and the following years in the amount as it is determined by the HEA and on time, possibly as a normative financing and not on the basis of separate annual contracts. Unfortunately, the Minister was unable to promise any major change in this respect, due to the acute general financial difficulties of the country.

9.5.2 HEIs should pay for all appeals processes

Follow-up measure: The HAC proposed an amendment to the HEA accordingly. Unfortunately, the proposal was not accepted by the Ministry of Education and Culture and thus, the HEA has not been amended in this respect.

9.5.3 Universities could see, under exactly defined conditions and rules, the possibility to support HAC in some specific cases

Follow-up measure: The HAC’s Strategic Committee investigated what additional sources of income can be identified for the HAC. No relevant additional source was identified. The HAC did not intend to propose changing the relevant regulations in order to charge expert fees from HEIs for more services than currently allowed, beyond the proposal related to appeals (see 6.5.2 above). The HAC is regularly checking possibilities for third-party financing; unfortunately domestic tenders have so far excluded HAC participation.

End of 2010 report.

10. SWOT

The SWOT analysis incorporates the replies of HAC members and the members of the Secretariat. The HAC members’ responses were discussed at the plenary meeting on February 1, 2013.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professionalism, disciplines in the HAC • commitment to quality • perception of key issues, constructive meeting environment • decision preparation and -making largely independent from institutional and disciplinary interests • the <i>de jure</i> critical question of independence balanced by the <i>de facto</i> personal independence in decision-making • good expert committee structure • wide range of external experts • well developed procedures (separately for institutional and program accreditation) • good organization and dedicated and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • varying consistency in applying the criteria, both between the different expert groups and in the plenary, first of all arts and humanities, where evaluation is more subjective than in the natural sciences • due to lack of resources no systematic analysis of the HAC’s work • HAC members have little international outlook and experience, international developments remain predominantly at the level of the Secretariat • some issues would demand more in-depth examination, which is currently not possible due to workload • lack of resources precludes raising awareness about the value of accreditation to the general public • sometimes explanations for ex ante

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>professional staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reliable, secure database for online evaluations and voting 	<p>evaluation decisions are ambiguous and intermittently there are charges of prejudiced judgments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too frequent changes in document formats • occasionally short deadlines lead to rushed work and overtime for staff • young staff with English proficiency cannot be recruited and not enough time for periodic staff training due to budget constraints and workload
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pushing for greater personal and financial independence • “fighting” for stability in conditions influencing HAC operations • stressing difference between accreditation and licensing and the division of authority between them • raising public awareness on quality of programs, irrespective of operating licenses, more effective and persistent outward communication • ensuring that sectoral policies take into consideration the HAC’s expert opinion regarding legislation and strategies on quality issues • raising quality criteria, especially for doctoral schools • new strategy for tasks broken down to more effective staff work to achieve increased productivity and time efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recent legislation forces HAC to conduct most evaluations as part of licensing procedure of Educational Authority – no direct working relationship with institutions • Rushed transformation of the higher education environment leads to inconsistencies in regulations and content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contradictions and loopholes in legislation ○ Hurried decisions in HAC that lead to inconsistencies that are hard to remedy • Frequently changing legislation affecting the HAC and its status weakens its position within the higher education sector • The strong motivation, due mostly to financing structure, by higher education institutions to put quantity (student numbers, numbers of programs, etc.) above quality, which the HAC should balance with stricter judgments • Budget constraints that threaten the motivation and preparedness of external experts

11. Appendices

1. Terms of Reference
2. HAC standards and criteria for master programs and ex post accreditation of institutions and programs
3. The HAC's Mission and quality policy statement
4. Sample from ministerial decree on qualification and outcome requirements for degree program in Medicine
5. Sample Guide for the Preparation of Self-assessment Simultaneous Assessment of General Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacology and Pharmacy Programs
6. Annual Report 2011-2012
7. The 2011 Higher Education Act
8. International Advisory Board members 1995-present (Recommendations from 2003 on are on the HAC website at <http://www.mab.hu>)
9. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (leaflet)
10. Last issue of the *Accreditation Gazette (Akkreditációs Értesítő)* 2012/3 (in Hungarian)
11. Ministry of National Resources Report on the system of education in Hungary

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