

## HAC International Advisory Board Meeting 30-31 October 2015

### MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Meeting Summary

The International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee meets annually with the assignment to review the work of the HAC in the preceding year as well as to discuss and comment on topical issues relating to the HAC. The 2015 meeting took place on 30 and 31 October. On Friday afternoon, members of the HAC and the Hungarian Advisory Board of the HAC as well as ministry representatives were invited. The Secretary of State for Higher Education sent his regrets a few days before the meeting.

**Board members** present were Achim Hopbach, Jürgen Kohler, Liudvika Leisyte and Christian Thune. Stanislaw Chwirot sent regrets and Jasmina Havranek notified the HAC subsequently of her absence. **HAC Vice-President** Ákos Jobbágy, and **members** István Bérczi, Gábor Gerber, and László T. Kóczy and, from the **HAC staff**, Deputy Secretary General Éva Ruff attended the first day of the meeting.

On Saturday morning, only the International Advisory Board met with **HAC President** Ervin Balázs, who chaired both meetings, and **Secretary General** Tibor Szántó and program officer for foreign affairs Christina Rozsnyai, both of whom also attended each session.

The meeting documents sent to the Board included a draft on **Strategic Alternatives** for the Friday session, and the **HAC Annual Report** and its **Follow-up Report on the Board Recommendations of 2014** for the Saturday discussion.

#### Recommendations of the HAC's International Advisory Board

##### *Preamble*

The Board was once again pleased to meet HAC and Hungarian Advisory Board members during the Friday meeting and appreciated the discussion on strategic options, as these present themselves to the HAC after it has completed the third cycle of institutional accreditation since 1994. The Board underlined that now there is a **window of opportunity to review the massive number of tasks** HAC was taking on. Although most are set down in the legislation in place, the HAC can use the experience gained to reconsider its self-designed approach to the legal requirements and to **revisit the link between institutional and programme accreditation with a view to streamlining its activities under consideration of the resources** available. There should be resources remaining both to conduct intermittent **thematic analyses**, in line with the ESG, of the effects of the HAC's quality assurance within the sector, and to **maintain a regular discourse** on quality assurance issues and developments **with stakeholders**.

Concluding the meeting the Board formulated its Recommendations.

##### *Recommendations*

#### **1. Follow-up on 2014 Recommendations: Independence**

The Board took note from the follow-up report received that not all Recommendations had been resolved. At the 2015 meeting, however, the Board focused on key issues, first of all possible strategic scenarios. The Board observed that the matter of the **HAC's independence remains an issue** in that the conditions for **recalling HAC members** by their delegating bodies **have not been defined in the legislation**. The Board **recommends that HAC continue to press this matter with legislators**, and to stress that the next self-evaluation for

ENQA membership review has to start in a year's time. This review will focus in particular on weaknesses identified in the previous scrutiny.

## 2. Strategy

The Board continues to uphold its Recommendation from 2014, urging "...that the HAC use this window of opportunity to **take a proactive role in shaping the strategy** in order to ensure that the quality as well as the **quality assurance of higher education become one of the strategy's cornerstones**. HAC is well placed to advocate that 'consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself', a concept that Hungary has committed to by signing the Berlin Communiqué."

In this light the Board recommends that the strategy to be followed **focus on the role of the HAC in helping to enhance the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions in a holistic way** that goes beyond curricular and resource aspects but looks at the **quality of the student life-cycle** and involves **governance and managerial aspects**, and that is an ongoing institutional process.

In order to work out the strategy the **Board recommends** an operational approach that involves

- a set of internal **strategy meetings among HAC staff** to gather feedback on the strategic options, based on the staff's experiences;
- setting up an internal steering group that includes quality assurance experts (from higher education institutions, the HAC pool, etc.). Their role would be to steer the consultation process and to moderate discussions. The **involving of international experts** in the process would be very useful and HAC is advised to consider the possibilities for this;
- a series of **consultations with stakeholders**, namely higher education institutions, students and employers, to establish co-ownership and legitimacy for the HAC for its **support of the internal quality assurance that higher education institutions** must develop and enhance on an ongoing basis in accordance with Hungary's commitment to the Bologna process;
- **consultation with former HAC presidents**, if considered feasible, to gather their experiences with HAC as well as the current situation of HAC and quality assurance in the Hungarian higher education landscape;
- **consultation on an operative level with the ministry or Educational Authority** to ensure the alignment of the legal framework with strategic plans;
- producing a **clear concept** that sets down the steps to implementation of the strategy with **timelines and responsibilities**.

## 3. Public information

The Board considers as one of the fundamental functions of a quality assurance agency to make the quality of higher education known and accessible to the public. Therefore, the Board is disappointed that the **scheme to include the HAC logo** in the Higher Education Entrance Catalogue that would inform students about quality-assured programmes **has failed**. The **Board recommends that the HAC follow-up on this matter with the ministry and the Educational Authority**.

The Board noted that it would be happy to **receive from HAC midway between this and next year's meeting a report** on the decision and progress on the matter of the logo.

The Board also recommends that the HAC take a proactive approach to exchanging experiences about various aspects on quality assurance with the three main stakeholder groups – higher education institutions, students, and employers – on the one hand, and to raising awareness about quality assurance in the public at large on the other hand.

#### 4. Funding

The Board appreciates the HAC's decision to involve foreign experts in its evaluations and recommends to do this not only with university professor applications but other procedures as well, in line with this guideline in the ESG. The Board takes note that the HAC is conducting intermittent thematic analyses of certain aspects of higher education, such as Hungarian doctoral schools, although the areas of analysis could be expanded with additional resources. Therefore, the Board recommends that HAC seek additional or dedicated funding for additional tasks, including the organisation of a new strategy and for regular discussion forums with stakeholders also in the long term.

The Board set the dates of the next annual meeting for Friday and Saturday, **28-29 October 2016**.

*Noted down by Christina Rozsnyai*

*Amended and approved by the HAC Board via electronic mail.*