

## **HAC International Advisory Board Meeting**

10 November 2017

### **Meeting Summary and Recommendations**

#### **Meeting Summary**

The International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee held its annual meeting at the HAC offices on 10 November 2017. Board members had received the meeting documents in due time. They comprised the HAC Annual Report 2016/17; the draft Self-Assessment Report for the ENQA review; and the Follow-up on 2016 Board Recommendations.

The meeting was chaired by HAC President Valéria Csépe. HAC Vice-President Ákos Jobbágy and HAC member István Bérczi, as well as staff members Christina Rozsnyai and Andrea Seregdy also attended. Participants from the International Advisory Board were Achim Hopbach, Lucka Lorber, Liudvika Leisyte, Mieczyslaw W. Socha and Tove Bull. Dhurata Bozo and Peter Findlay were unable to participate, the latter due to illness, while the former sent extensive comments and recommendations by mail prior to the meeting.

The President welcomed the participants and the agenda was accepted. The meeting proceeded according to the agenda and began with an overview of the work of the HAC in the past year. The focus of the discussion was on the HAC's external review by ENQA for renewing the HAC's membership in the organisation. The review also serves for the HAC to apply for inclusion into the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR) for the first time. Further, participants had received a document on follow-up actions the HAC had taken in response to the International Advisory Board's recommendations from 2016, but the discussion on them was included in the general theme of the external review.

The next meeting date was set tentatively for 26-27 October 2018, but it can be finalised only after the next HAC Board takes office in March.

Concluding the meeting, the HAC President and members as well as Andrea Seregdy left the room and the Board formulated its recommendations with the assistance of Christina Rozsnyai.

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

The International Advisory Board welcomed the documents received prior to the meeting and the discussion with meeting participants regarding the work of the HAC. The International Board is sensitive to the fact that with the coming into office of the new president and the subsequent implementation of a new, short-term strategy, the redesign of its institutional accreditation approach, the upcoming ENQA review, and the stepping in of a new HAC Board early next year, the HAC is in a decisive and at once vulnerable phase of its development. Upcoming challenges extend to devising medium and long-term strategies for the new HAC Board, the focus of the HAC's evaluations on higher education institution internal quality assurance, and shifting the composition of its external experts to include foreign members of visiting teams.

With these developments in mind, and in consideration of the recommendations by Dhurata Bozo sent prior to the meeting, the International Advisory Board issues the following **Recommendations**.

1. The International Board recommends that for the new HAC Board, the HAC develop a medium and long-term strategy based on its common position on the goals of the HAC, in consultation with higher education institutions and other external stakeholders. A derived action plan for the



implementation of the strategy should extend to its operability for the Board as well as the staff of the Secretariat. Specifically it should:

- a) Ensure the implementation of the Strategy, following the predicted milestones;
- b) Raise accountability and awareness to all the actors involved;
- c) Provide in due time, dedicated information and analysis about its implementation;
- d) Identify potential lacks or gaps in the routine work but also in strategic governance, which would be addressed;
- e) Eventually, provide information and support the internal quality assurance process necessary for continued ENQA membership.

The International Advisory Board notes that good communication with all parties concerned is necessary in this period of transition.

2. The International Advisory Board recommends that with the major shift in Hungary in the approach to institutional accreditation focusing on the institutions' internal quality management, the HAC needs to develop a mid-term plan on how the new approach should be implemented. It is highly advisable to specify how the HAC works with higher education institutions and its experts to transmit the essence of this approach, which requires a new attitude that rests on the institutions' ongoing responsibility for their own quality, through forums and consultations. The process presumes that the HAC staff is thoroughly trained in the details of the new approach.
3. The International Advisory Board recommends that, based on experiences of the pilot evaluation of the initial five higher education institutions, the HAC compile a handbook for its internal and external stakeholders. It should refer to the legal framework of accreditation and include a comprehensive description of HAC, its structure and operations, policies and accreditation procedures, accreditation standards, decision-making mechanisms, etc.
4. The International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC review its practice of evaluating doctoral schools twice a year. Even if such reviews extend only to the schools' basic staff information, it seems in contradiction with the HAC's new goal to emphasise the responsibility of higher education institutions for their internal quality assurance. Rather, the HAC's evaluations should focus on quality enhancement and supporting higher education institutions in this area.
5. In negotiations with the delegating bodies to the new HAC Board, the International Advisory Board recommends to take the opportunity to emphasise the need for age, gender and stakeholder balance.
6. The International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC develop further its internal quality assurance system that extends to not only the Secretariat staff but also Board members and external experts. Crucially, the quality loop (PDCA cycle) ranging from the identification of problems to actions taken to alleviate them should be addressed and implemented.
7. The International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC continue to narrow down its expert database to include, beyond academic, quality assurance, and student experts also more stakeholders from industry and business and to gradually build up an international pool. For the latter, the HAC could approach other agencies in the networks where it is a member. Selection should be done on the basis of set criteria, and should involve a contract that sets down what is expected of them and extend to their training.



8. The International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC extend its internationalisation not only to inviting foreign experts but to consider its participation as partner in international projects. While the International Advisory Board is aware that such work requires human and initial financial resources, the planned expansion of the Secretariat could consider taking on staff with project experience and ensure the staff's financing. Beyond securing additional financing, international activity embeds good practices within the agency.
9. In order to increase the visibility of the HAC internationally, the International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC update its English website to be more attractive and more informative.
10. The International Advisory Board welcomes the establishment of the new Hungarian Advisory Board as a potentially valuable stakeholder representation in the work of the HAC. It recommends the HAC that the outcomes of their activities be published in order to gain full benefit from their participation. Further, it recommends involving the members of the Hungarian Advisory Board in workshops and forums to discuss quality assurance in Hungarian higher education.
11. Recognising that discussions are already ongoing along these lines, the International Advisory Board recommends that the HAC coordinate its financial plan in line with its strategy in order to synchronise its goals, commitments and resources.

*Noted down by Christina Rozsnyai*

*Amended and approved by the HAC International Advisory Board via electronic mail*

*23 November 2017*