

Annual Report 2015 to September 2016¹

In May 2016, **President Ervin Balázs resigned** due to his heading a large European project in his academic field of agriculture. The **new president Valéria Csépe**, a psychologist and neuroscientist at the Brain Imaging Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA RCNS) and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Academia Europaea, was formally appointed from 1st of June 2016 (officially and in practice from 1st of September, 2016).

Vice-President Ákos Jobbágy acted as the head of HAC in the interim period. In addition to the tasks related to the plenary meetings and expert committees, Professor Jobbágy convened an *ad hoc* committee to steer the discussion on a **new HAC strategy**.

The main HAC activities in 2015-16 were

1. Tasks assigned to the HAC by legislation: institutional and program accreditation; the accreditation of new VET programs; of new bachelor and master programs and new qualification frameworks; new doctoral schools; providing an opinion on applications for professorial appointments;
2. The reaccreditation of doctoral schools (7) and the evaluation of running doctoral schools where changes occurred in relation to the accreditation criteria (128);
3. Expressing an opinion on legislation (amendment to the HE Act);
4. Organizing the site visit in January 2015 of the ENQA panel monitoring the HAC;
5. Measures affecting HAC financing;
6. External contacts.

1. Core tasks

The **core tasks** proceeded as in past years. HAC is constantly updating the pool of nearly 2000 experts, with the addition of foreign evaluators who take part in the English language reviewing process of applications for university professorship. Unfortunately, the pool as such did not change fundamentally.

In 2015 and 2016 (late August), 28 and 27 **appeals** respectively were lodged with our Board of Appeals and only five and seven (22% on average) of HAC decisions were overturned. By law, decisions on university professor applications must be lodged with the minister responsible for legal supervision of high education (Ministry of Human Capacities) who forwards these to the HAC's Appeals Board. On decisions on new programs, qualification frameworks and new doctoral schools, appeals must be lodged with the Educational Authority. Accreditation decisions on running institutions or programs may be appealed against with the HAC's Appeals Board directly. The Educational Authority / minister grants licenses to operate for new programs, qualification frameworks and doctoral schools in consideration of the HAC's decisions. In 2015, the minister granted licenses to three new programs (no data available for HAC for 2016) and four and eight university professors respectively in 2015 and 2016 after negative HAC decisions.

¹ Based on President's Report for 2015 by Ervin Balázs with updates for 2016

Continuing its **focus on the internal quality assurance** of higher education institutions, the HAC examined these activities and attitudes especially when looking at doctoral schools and university professor applications.

With the evaluation of **university professor applications** the HAC applied its revised point grading system that includes the reviewers' text elaborations. This allowed for a better consideration of the quality behind the numbers concerning scientific achievement. The HAC considers professors to be the cornerstones of good quality at universities, and hence it is regretful that altogether twelve professors were appointed in 2015 and 2016 whose application was not supported by HAC. Two such applications were not appealed against with the HAC's Board of Appeal and although the applicants in this case were formally not universities and thus there was no legal infringement, the HAC does not consider such a procedure to be in the spirit of quality assurance.

With regard to **institutional accreditation**, where HAC is concluding its third full cycle, there were 15 procedures conducted in 2015. Of these, one was not accredited and another received short-term accreditation until the end of 2017 only. Two have to submit action plans and five will undergo follow-up evaluations in two years. The decisions on four institutions were left for 2016. Three of them were since accredited, with one to submit an action plan and one to undergo a follow-up evaluation. One institution was not yet decided.

It should be pointed out that all institutions are asked to submit updates within two years after the accreditation decision regarding actions taken on HAC recommendations or to report fundamental changes at the institution.

The table below provides an overview of ex ante evaluations in the past three years. (Data for 2016 until September only.)

Application type	Discussed			Positive decisions			Negative		
	2014	2015	9/2016	2014	2015	9/2016	2014	2015	9/2016
VET program	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1
Framework BA	4	1	-	1	1	-	3	0	-
New BA program	39	17	9	17	9	4	23	8	5
Framework MA	19	4	1	9	2	1	11	2	-
New MA program	51 + 25 5-yr	65	22	27	39	11	24	26	11
New doctoral school	1	5	1	1	2	-	-	3	1
Univ. professors	138	136	120	111	107	91	39	29	25

In overview, the HAC undertook the following ex post procedures in 2015 and to 9/2016

Type of procedure	2015	2016
Program monitoring (BA and MA)	8 (5 positive, 3 negative decisions)	-
Institutional accreditation	9 universities (=17 faculties) + 6 colleges	3 universities (= 4 faculties) + 1 college + 1 college faculty

Disciplinary accreditation health sciences	12 programs, 7 specializations at 7 institutions (52 programs total)	-
economics, business	24 programs at 32 institutions and 43 teaching locations in 19 cities (209 programs total)	
Appeals (Number of decisions)	28 (5 HAC decisions overturned)	27 (7 HAC decisions overturned)
Operating doctoral schools and their core members	135 doctoral schools, 1300 core members	57 (733)

A major accomplishment for the HAC in 2015 was the completion of the **disciplinary program accreditation** of health care and medicine and of business and economics education whose site visits took place mostly in 2014. In the health sciences, only one off-site program abroad was not accredited. Eighteen programs were asked to submit action plans and 29 will undergo follow-up evaluations.

The highly complex procedure for economics and business programs concluded with a voluminous report passed by the HAC in January 2016. Here the HAC did not accredit 20 programs, three of them abroad.

2. Doctoral schools

In close cooperation with the National Doctoral Council, the HAC had worked out the *modus operandi* for the quality assurance of **doctoral schools** provided for in the pertaining government decree, based on which their evaluations continued in 2015. The focus was on the investigation of both formal and content of the schools' activities and achievements.

Of the 135 operating doctoral schools evaluated in 2015 and 57 in 2016, accreditation was withdrawn for nine and four schools respectively.

The evaluations take place based on out established **database** www.doktori.hu, which is connected to the database of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. A major obstacle to the evaluations via the database is the inconsistency with which schools update their information on personnel changes.

The HAC has **collected its experiences** regarding the evaluation of doctoral schools in each of its disciplinary expert committees, a summary of which it has sent to the secretary of state for education.

3. Opinions on legislation

In 2015 and 2016 the HAC continued to discuss draft legislation. Three are especially noteworthy, the amendment to the **higher education act**, the amended **government decree on doctoral schools** and the new register of **degree program frameworks**.

4. ENQA review

The site visit for the ENQA review to grant continuation of full membership to HAC, following "member under review" status, took place on January 20, 2015. The panel saw improvements in the two standards with which the HAC had not complied in the main

evaluation and granted “full compliance” with the standard on financing and “substantial compliance” with the standard on independence. Although the ENQA decision granted full membership to the HAC until 2018, the HAC continues to work to comply with the counsel by ENQA, that “HAC is recommended to persist in the present discussions with the Ministry of Human Resources and the Educational Authority about amendments and a clarification of the links and distribution of competences between MHR-EA and HAC in order to increase its stability and sustainability.”

5. HAC financing

The HAC **budget and finances stabilized** in 2015 and ensured its operations. The 155 million HUF (~ 500 k EUR) state support matched that of the previous year. Additionally there was income of 20 million HUF (~64 k EUR) from a EU-funded **project** (TAMOP-4.1.2.B.2-13/1-2013-0010) coordinated by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, in which the HAC was the partner for the **quality assurance of teacher training**. The state support for 2016 is 160 million HUF (~516 k EUR).

6. External contacts

The **HAC’s Hungarian Advisory Board** met in March 2015 to discuss topical issues, including the ENQA review report. It supported the HAC in initiating a change in legislation in light of the ENQA recommendation. In 2016 there has been no meeting of this Board. The new HAC President plans to renew this Board inviting new members.

The **International Advisory Board** met in October 2015, with several HAC members present. One of its main recommendations is to increase the HAC’s participation in the higher education quality assurance activities on the international level. Their recommendations are accessible on the HAC website.

The HAC continues its close cooperation with the **Hungarian Rectors’ Conference**, the **Higher Education Planning Council**, the **National Doctoral Council** and the **National Bologna Commission**. Their representatives, as well as the members of the HAC’s Board of Appeals and Financial Supervisory Board, are permanently invited to the public part of the HAC’s monthly plenary meetings. Also invited are the chairperson of the **Educational Authority** and the **State Secretary for Higher Education**, although they rarely attend. HAC members participate regularly as HAC representatives in university and college events.

Together with HAC Secretary General Tibor Szántó, HAC President Ervin Balázs received Professor *Mahmut Özer*, Rector of *Bülent Ecevit University* who at that time was also the president of the **Turkish Rectors’ Conference**, in September 2015. Headed by Prof. Dr. *Hazman Shah Bin Abdullah*, the delegation of the **Malaysian Qualification Agency** (MQA) visited HAC on March 24, 2016. MQA initiated a project of cooperation between the two agencies aiming at mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and higher education qualifications. Since the emphasis was to be on the latter, which is not in the HAC’s scope of authority, the new President informed MQA that the HAC cannot take part in this project.

HAC is frequently asked to propose experts to **external evaluation teams abroad**. In 2015 HAC experts took part in such reviews in **Kazakhstan and Lithuania**. Moreover, HAC staff member for foreign affairs Christina Rozsnyai was **elected to the Board of ENQA** for a three-

year term in October 2015. She also serves regularly on international commissions and boards. Tibor Szántó was **EQAR Register Committee** member until end of June 2015, when he resigned from this position.

President Ervin Balázs emphasized the value of the HAC's international participation as far as finances allow. He and the Secretary General took part in the **ENQA general assembly** in April 2015 and at **the Members' Forum** in October 2015 together with Christina Rozsnyai. The new president, Valéria Csépe, is taking part in the **general assembly** in October **2016** in Gloucester together with Tibor Szántó and Christina Rozsnyai.

In April 2016, the **HAC hosted the 6th ENQA Members' Forum** with 90+ participants. Attached to the two half-day meetings and several board and working group meetings, the HAC arranged a Danube Cruise for participants and a sightseeing tour on the afternoon after the end of the conference.

Christina Rozsnyai continues to act as **Secretary General of CEENQA** since 2000. Ervin Balázs was co-organizer and speaker in the OECD-supported agricultural higher education conference in Zaragoza, Spain in June 2015. The conference documents are available on the HAC website.