



## Annual Report 2013 to September 2014

The main activities in 2013/14 were,

1. Legislated tasks, submitting expert opinions on request of the Educational Authority, and internal developments,
    - Institutional accreditation
    - Program accreditation in disciplinary groups
    - Evaluation of applications for new VET programs
    - Evaluation of applications for new Bachelor and Master programs
    - Evaluation of framework program requirements for Bachelor and Master programs
    - Evaluation of applications for new doctoral schools
    - Evaluation of applications for university professorships
  2. Budget and finances
  3. The external review by an ENQA team in the second half of 2013 and Full Member Under Review status granted to HAC
  4. Legislative and internal changes in 2014
  5. National and international relations.
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1. For carrying out the legislated tasks the HAC has expanded its pool of experts to 1500 evaluators. The review of the entire pool is planned.

The current legislation requires that the minister request the HAC's second opinion only with evaluations of university professorships, while with applications for new study programs, framework program requirements and doctoral schools the minister/Educational Authority may grant license to operate without regard to a negative HAC decision. Two framework program requirements and two new program applications were granted license in 2013 after the HAC did not accredit them, and between January and September 30, 2014 there was one such program (applied for both its framework requirement and new program). As regards professorships, in 2013, the Educational Authority asked for a second opinion from the HAC's Board of Appeals in 34 cases. In nine of these, the Board of Appeals changed the HAC's decisions. January-September 2014 there were 15 appeals, with three decisions changed. Nevertheless, the minister granted nine professorships not supported by the HAC or its Board of Appeals in 2013/14.

In the previous year, the HAC plenum had set two special priorities for 2013, to review all doctoral schools and to focus on the quality of university professorships.

Collaborating with the National Doctoral Council, the HAC worked out a scheme for a review of the **doctoral schools** with regard to their formal requirements. The review, like all evaluations, takes place via the doctoral database ([www.doktori.hu](http://www.doktori.hu)), which were connected to the new publications database of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for its members. The lag of universities to update the database continues to be a problem.

In evaluating applications for **university professorships** the HAC continues to use a point scale for specified areas of review, to which experts add their evaluations, which allows for better identifying excellence.

The evaluation of **new VET program applications** was a new task for the HAC in 2013. The problems encountered due to the late publication by the ministry of the framework requirements and the ensuing short evaluation period was discussed at length in the HAC Self-Evaluation Report for ENQA (on [www.mab.hu](http://www.mab.hu)). The subsequent licenses the Educational Authority granted to 42 VET programs not approved by the HAC on grounds that the reasons for the negative opinion would not hold legally caused considerable consternation with regard to the quality of new programs, with one HAC member resigning as a consequence.

In 2013, the HAC conducted three university and five college ex post **institutional accreditation** procedures. Until September 2014, three university and 18 college procedures (14 of them denominational) were concluded.

The following tables provide an overview of activities.

Application type	Discussed			Positive decisions			Negative decisions		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
VET program	0	237	4	0	125	3	0	112	1
Framework BA	5	3	4	4	1	1	1	2	3
New BA program	44	31	33	17	10	14	27	21	19
Framework MA	14	10	17	8	2	8	6	8	9
New MA program	84	49	54	49	26	27	35	23	27
New doctoral	4	5	1	3	3	1	1	2	0
Univ. professors	125	107	137	93	80	110	32	27	27

Other activities are shown in the table below.

Application type	2013	2014
BA and MA Programs monitored (conditional accreditation)	41 (incl. 8 negative)	6 (2)
Ex post institutional accreditation	8	21
Ex post program accreditation /disciplinary	-	5 disc., 85 progs (in process)
Appeals	34	15
Doctoral schools	120	(140 in process)

The HAC took on a **new program officer** in autumn 2014, who began her work assisting with the evaluations of doctoral schools and disciplinary program accreditation. The FTE number of

staff is now 13.75. The **HAC database TIR** (<http://tir.mab.hu>) was further developed, among others to accommodate the evaluation of VET programs. Since 2013, “paper-based” evaluations are conducted entirely via TIR. The direct link with the **doctoral schools database** ([www.doktori.hu](http://www.doktori.hu)) was established, facilitating the sharing of data, such as the expert pool.

2. The government **budget allocation** in 2013 was raised compared to the previous year, although still below the support received earlier (61.9 million HUF in 2012, 155 million HUF in 2013). Before the promised first quarterly installment was actually transferred to the HAC account – in August 2013 –, the agency depleted its total reserves to remain in operation. The financial situation was ameliorated with income for evaluating the newly established VET program applications, and the amount of other procedural fees was raised in April 2013.

For the **disciplinary accreditation of health and medical programs**, the HAC received an additional 3 million HUF (~10,000 euro) ministry support in order to be able to invite three foreign experts into its visiting teams (one of them, the designated team chair, eventually resigned).

In 2014, the government allocation is the same as last year at 155 million HUF (500,000 euro), but the legal guarantees are still not set to satisfaction. The HAC was able to save expenses by moving its document storage from the cellar to two former office rooms.

3. The **external review** of the HAC to continue its membership in ENQA has led to a “Full member under review” status of the HAC, with a monitoring evaluation to be concluded by 2015. The HAC did not comply with two standards, Independence and Resources. With a view to the publication of the new ESG following the 2015 meeting of EU ministers, ENQA asked for the monitoring evaluation, including its own Board decision, to be completed by May 2015, after which an entirely new review would have to be conducted based on the new ESG.

Following the meeting of the **International Advisory Board** in 2013, which took place after the HAC received the report of the ENQA team as well as a request for clarification by ENQA, though not its final decision, the Advisory Board made a series of recommendations to ensure that the “de facto independence of ... operations and decision-making” is guaranteed by the government, including “a legal guarantee which ensures that HAC members can only be dismissed on grounds of serious misconduct ... and only after the grounds have been set out in a document...”.

The **Hungarian Advisory Board** of the HAC was invited to the International Advisory Board meeting, and the eight members present decided to address a letter to the Secretary of State for Higher Education with **specific recommendations** based on those of the International Board. In subsequent months, which involved a change in the government post for higher education, the HAC made suggestions for specific legislative changes to promote its compliance with the ENQA requirements. Consequently, some **changes to the Higher Education Act** and respective government decree were enacted (see next section).

Additionally, the new **Secretary of State for Higher Education**, László Palkovics, **arranged a meeting with the President of ENQA** Padraig Walsh and Director Maria Kelo during the

ENQA general assembly to clarify the government's position on the HAC and discuss the HAC's status within Hungarian higher education. Mr. Palkovics was accompanied by a member (and former President) of the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, Gábor Szabó, Deputy Secretary of State Zoltán Maruzsa, and HAC President Ervin Balázs joined the discussion.

The meeting **resulted in a clarification** of the nature of the HAC review (a first of its kind for ENQA), which is to focus on the identified two standards judged non-compliant, with a small review team and, if possible, with the same chair as in the original evaluation. The Secretary reiterated the Ministry commitment to **add two members to the HAC who would not be delegated by the Minister** and to provide **reliable funding** for the agency. A big step forward, if it will be implemented, is the Secretary's promise to **add the HAC logo to accredited study programs in the Higher Education Entrance Catalog**, which contains the programs students can apply for each year. With this, there would be clear separation of programs with a quality seal and others licensed without HAC support.

4. There were several **legal and internal changes** in 2014. The HAC received several **new members**. Three members had left in 2013 whose places were filled in February 2014. In addition, in order to reduce the ratio of minister delegates to HAC, the number of members was raised by law from 18 to 20 (and would be 22 with the two additional members promised by the Minister). The National Union of Students and the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry are each delegating a member. The government decree regulating the HAC was changed to state that any delegating body wishing to **recall a member has to provide an explanation if it does so**.

To further strengthen the independent status of the HAC, the Higher Education Act was amended to declare the HAC as an "**independent**" body of experts. The HAC President continues to be proposed by the Minister in agreement with the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and all HAC members receive their letters of appointment by the Prime Minister. Moreover, the three members of the Board of Appeals continue to be selected and appointed by the Minister.

As regards the HAC's **financial stability**, a clause was added to the law amendment that states, "*The HAC's financial support, which will ensure the lawful and adequate-level support, also under consideration of the expert body's other annual incomes, shall be allocated as an appropriation in the ministry budget.*" Although the HAC requested it, no change was made in the national budget law that would have assigned a dedicated budget line for the HAC's annual budget.

Nor was a change made about the right of the Educational Authority or the Minister to disregard the HAC's expert opinion or that of the Board of Appeals.

Effective from 2015 on, the HAC decided to request **applications for university professorships** to be submitted both in Hungarian and **English**, with a view to inviting foreign experts to evaluate the applications.

5. The new **Hungarian Advisory Board** held its first full meeting on February 28, 2013, and some of its members participated in the meeting of the **International Advisory Board**, held October 25-26. The recommendations of both Boards can be read on the HAC website (the former, in Hungarian, recommended to require the higher-level secondary graduation examination for entrants to higher education).

There is ongoing contact with the **Educational Authority**, who since 2014 notify the HAC about their licensing decisions on submissions the HAC had evaluated. The HAC has regular contact with the **Hungarian Rectors' Conference**, and the **Higher Education Planning Committee**, whose representatives are permanently invited to the open section of the HAC's plenary meetings. Also invited are the members of the **Board of Appeals** and the **Financial Supervisory Board** of the HAC, the **President of the Educational Authority** and the **Secretary of State for Higher Education**, as well as a representative of the **National Union of Students**. All except the latter two participate in the meetings most of the time.

The HAC is also active in events organized by the **Hungarian TEMPUS** Foundation.

The **National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation** under the U.S. Department of Education continues to recognize the accreditation of programs in medicine by the HAC, which involves periodical reporting by the HAC on its accreditation practices in that field. To this end, the HAC, through its medical experts, sends visiting teams to all non-European countries where medical students can do their internships (to date, hospitals in Israel, Korea and Japan).

HAC President Ervin Balázs continues to follow the work of the **National Bologna Committee**, but notes that it meets only a few times a year. HAC members regularly participate in events organized by colleges and universities.

In 2013/14 the HAC was again asked to recommend its **experts** to evaluations in Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Germany and Romania. Secretary General Tibor Szántó is a member of the **Register Committee of EQAR** and, until November 2013, was in the **Review Committee of ENQA Board**. He also advised the **EdNet QA agency of Kirgizstan**, chaired a pilot accreditation in **Bishkek**, and served as review panel member in **Almaty, Kazakhstan**. Program officer for foreign affairs Christina Rozsnyai remains Secretary General of **CEENQA** and sits on the Board of **AQ Austria** and the Institutional Accreditation Commission of **FIBAA**. Both participate as expert team members in international evaluations. Staff member Judit Négyesi participated in the **EQAF** of the E4 in 2013 and will take part in the **ENQA QACHE** Project Experts' Forum in November 2014. As in the years before, Ervin Balázs and Tibor Szántó attended the **ENQA general assemblies** in 2013 and 2014.

**Foreign delegations** continue to exchange experiences about higher education and quality assurance with the HAC, from the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Kirgizstan in 2013 and China, Malaysia and Ecuador in 2014.