

# Annual Report 2016 to September 2017<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Activities

Ervin Balázs resigned his post of HAC president in April 2016. With Valéria Csépe taking up the presidency of the HAC in September 2016, the work of the organization continued with Board meetings and decision-making, concerning institutional and programme accreditation applications. At the same time, due to the long transition in leadership, a strategy for institutional accreditation, that was to be worked out following the completion of the HAC's third institutional accreditation cycle, had not yet been worked out. Consequently, six higher education institutions, whose accreditation deadlines were set to expire in December 2016, were extended. The follow-up monitoring processes of running programmes proceeded according to plan. Doctoral schools underwent their regular, twice yearly reviews to check whether they continue to meet the qualification criteria for their core academic staff. The evaluations of new doctoral schools and applications for university professor titles and positions continued.

In December 2016, on initiation of its new President, the HAC Board approved a *Strategy 2017-2018*<sup>2</sup>, including its new mission statement. An action plan was adopted at the January 2017 Board meeting. A key element in the Strategy is the re-alignment of how the HAC sees itself as a stakeholder within the higher education community. Within the scope of its legal mandate to evaluate the quality of teaching, research, development and innovation and activity in arts as well as the internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions, the HAC lays particular emphasis on quality enhancement and supporting the embedding of a quality culture in colleges and universities. The methodology of accreditation has become familiar to higher education institutions over the repeated accreditation cycles; however, the degree to which they have internalised a quality culture varies between institutions.

In 2017, the HAC set up a commission to revise its institutional accreditation criteria. The reason for this initiative was twofold. On the one hand, entering the country's fourth cycle of institutional accreditation called for a new approach and, on the other, the criteria needed to be adapted to the ESG 2015. The International Advisory Board recommended using a holistic approach to quality assurance in evaluating institutions with a focus on comprehensive teaching and learning goals and the development of competencies in students within the scope of the entire student life-cycle. The commission was made up of two academics with expertise in quality assurance; an expert in quality assurance process design in regional government administration; a student; and a PhD student. The new criteria were adopted by the HAC Board at its meeting on 21 April 2017 and the new Self-Evaluation Guidelines for institutions on 26 May.

With a Board decision on 7 July 2017, the HAC set up a new Quality Assurance Committee. Its thirteen members include most of the ad hoc ESG committee members together with academics with quality assurance management experience<sup>3</sup>. Their tasks comprise overseeing the HAC's internal quality assurance as well as contributing to the HAC Self-Evaluation Report for the ENQA review.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on President's Report for 2016 by with updates for 2017

<sup>2</sup> Strategy at <http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/hac/regulations/HAC%20Strategy%202017.doc>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=716:tir-minosegbiztositasi-bizottsag&catid=85:egyeb-bizottsagok&Itemid=505&lang=hu](http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=716:tir-minosegbiztositasi-bizottsag&catid=85:egyeb-bizottsagok&Itemid=505&lang=hu)

In autumn, the accreditation of five institutions whose accreditation was running out is taking place. The new process initially comprises four universities (two large and two smaller ones) and one college. The experiences of the pilot procedure will feed into an upgraded set of guidelines at the end of the year. The accreditation procedure for a sixth institution, the English-language Central European University (*Közép-Európai Egyetem*), is being prepared and will carry over into 2017.

The table in Annex 1 provides an overview of the HAC tasks and decisions for 2015, 2016 and until 30 September 2017.

Another important task was to update the HAC's expert database, which the International Advisory Board had recommended. In line with the Strategy, the President asked the chairs of the disciplinary expert commissions to initiate a review within their committees in order to retain only the most suitable and reliable experts. This does not preclude inviting new experts as needed in the future.

Subsequent to a HAC resolution passed at the end of 2016, the Committee again requested displaying the HAC logo in the Higher Education Entrance Catalogue next to degree programmes offered in order to signal their accreditation status. This would be necessary to signal their quality, given that there are programmes offered that were not supported by HAC. However, the required software development is delayed. Instead of the logo, there is guidance for students to visit the HAC website, which lists accredited programmes under the heading "For Stakeholders" (*Érdeklődőknek*).

### **2. Doctoral schools and University Professor applications**

Two crucial elements in the HAC's quality assurance, in addition to accreditation procedures, are the ongoing evaluations of doctoral schools and of new university professor applications.

For doctoral schools, specific deadlines for updating their information were set and the criteria and procedure were sharpened. The reviews take place twice a year, 15 April and 15 September, via the database [www.doktori.hu](http://www.doktori.hu). A 2016 amendment to Government Decree 387/2012 (XI. 19.) on doctoral schools extended the duration of doctoral training from three to four years, which called for a review of their structures and academic staff criteria.

The guidelines for the evaluation of university professor applications also needed sharpening, not least for the unclear wording that had led to misinterpretations. The applicants' scientific achievements and teaching activities stayed in focus, the core criteria as such remained unchanged, but the disciplinary committees were asked to review the specific criteria for their respective fields.

University professor applications were the first activity where HAC has planned to invite foreign experts. While the guidelines were translated into English, the vast majority of invited experts continued to be from the Hungarian community. A change in this respect remains an imminent task. Another ongoing issue is the recognition of foreign qualifications and titles within the scope of university professor qualifications, which are increasing and need to be dealt with on a case by case basis.

### **3. Tasks related to changes in legislation**

The education and outcome framework requirements, which are national-level requirements that form the basis for study programmes, were revised on initiative of the ministry, together with relevant expert groups, in 2015. (The framework requirements set down the name of the degree; the field; the length of studies; number of total ECTS credits and modules; the knowledge, skills, competencies and personal attitudes to be attained in line with the Hungarian Qualifications Framework; and the entry requirements.) Subsequently, the HAC needed to adapt its evaluation and accreditation criteria for them, which it adopted at its October 2016 meeting. At the same meeting, it also adopted the guidelines for evaluating applications for new framework requirements and for new programmes.

In October 2016, the Secretariat began preparations for dealing with the legal remit to provide information on the quality of institutions and programmes for the Educational Authority for its licensing of new institutions and programmes as well as its review of such licenses every five years. In February 2017, the Secretariat developed a scheme for handling such requests. The scheme calls for using existing information from previous evaluations, comprising accreditation decisions and quality considerations, such as follow-up results.

#### **4. Internal quality assurance**

The HAC considers a functioning internal quality assurance system vital in fulfilling its responsibility for external quality assurance at higher education institutions. Surveys have been requested annually from institutions evaluated in that year, and also from members of the expert visiting teams who participated in the evaluation. Considering the low response rates, the survey must be revised.

A global survey was sent to all higher education institutions in Hungary in early 2017 to ask them about the work of the HAC. The response rate was 63%. The responses regarding the role and importance of the HAC spread rather evenly between fully, mostly and partly satisfactory. A key question was in how far the HAC contributed to the institution's internal quality assurance, where 44.44% responded with "mostly". It is a strategic goal of the HAC to raise its support to institutions in this area. Another question on the adequacy of support by the HAC secretariat was on the positive side with regard to assistance provided. However, 40.74% of respondents were not fully satisfied with the professional consultation and number of forums for institutions. Again, it is a strategic goal of HAC to hold forums on various topics in the coming years. A question regarding the importance of involving foreign experts in the HAC's evaluations shows that about two thirds of respondents supports the idea. This coincides with the HAC's strategic plans.

Another key measure is the feedback received from the HAC's two external advisory boards, the Hungarian Advisory Board and the International Advisory Board. Following a hiatus, a new Hungarian Board of seven members from business and research institutes met for the first time on 7 June 2017<sup>4</sup>. They discussed the work of the HAC and its impact on external stakeholders. The International Advisory Board met on 28-29 October 2016 and formulated its recommendations as in the years before. A key item on the agenda was the new HAC

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<sup>4</sup> Hungarian Advisory Board membership at

[http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en)

strategy. A new, seven-member Board was invited in late 2016<sup>5</sup> and holds its first meeting on 10 November 2017.

### 5. ENQA review

At its plenary meeting on 7 July 2017, the HAC passed a decision to initiate its external evaluation for renewing its membership in the European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA), with its five-year membership ending in September 2018. At the same time, the Board decided that HAC would apply for the first time for inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The review is co-ordinated by ENQA. At the same plenary meeting, a Self-Evaluation Committee was set up, who developed the self-evaluation process and discussed the HAC's self-evaluation report over the autumn months. The Board is to pass the final report at its 15 December 2017 meeting. According to the Terms of Reference of the review<sup>6</sup>, the panel visit will take place in late April or early May 2018. The timeline is very tight, but had to take into consideration that the mandate of the current HAC Board expires on 28 February 2018, and even though several current members are expected to remain, there should be enough time for the new Board to familiarise itself with the HAC's work.

### 6. HAC financing

Compared to the previous year, in 2016 the HAC received an additional 5 million HUF (16 thousand EUR) state support, to which another 30 million HUF was added at the end of the year. This was due to a one-time allocation negotiated by the new president for 2017 for furniture and IT investments. The total 2016 budget thus reached 190 million HUF (610.4 thousand EUR).

The state budget allocated to the HAC for 2017 was based on that of the previous year, including the additional 5 million HUF, but negotiations are ongoing to build the 30 million HUF increase into the regular allocation. In addition, the HAC earns own income from applications for new programmes, doctoral schools and university professor applications. It can be said that the HAC has sufficient and regularly transmitted funds for its operations. In addition, the HAC received state financing to cover the fees for the external evaluation by ENQA and application to EQAR.

Annex 2 shows the HAC budget for 2016 and January to August 2017.

### 7. Secretariat

The new HAC President initiated a review of operations of the HACs Secretariat. An organisational structure and internal regulation was laid down in late 2016. In the course of 2017, there was some turnover of staff. While last year, six of 16 staff members were working past retirement, only four retired staff are currently still employed, three of whom will leave with the end of the Board term in February 2018. Four young programme officers and one administrator have been hired in addition to the Head of Secretariat. As of October 2017, the

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<sup>5</sup> Members of the new International Advisory Board and the recommendations of previous years at [http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/mabmin/ENQA-Terms%20of%20Reference\\_Final\\_after%20EQAR.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/web/doc/mabmin/ENQA-Terms%20of%20Reference_Final_after%20EQAR.pdf)

total staff encompasses the Head of Secretariat and Financial Director, ten programme officers, five of them part-time, three administrative staff and one IT officer.

Part of the office space was refurbished in summer 2017, with two rooms that were used as storage reinstated as staff space. A reception and waiting area was created, which also serves for small meetings. The HAC acquired new office chairs and there was investment into IT.

### **8. External contacts**

As in the past, the HAC's key stakeholders include the Ministry of Human Capacities and Educational Authority; the Hungarian Rector's Conference; the Hungarian Doctoral Council; the Higher Education and Scientific Council; the Association of Hungarian PhD Students; and the National Union of Students in Hungary. Delegates from the latter two organisations are on the HAC Board, while the previous bodies are permanently invited to the public part of the HAC plenary meetings (where no applications or personal issues are discussed) and provide feedback on specific issues.

The Head of Secretariat, Ágnes Mosolygó Gődény, and Christina Rozsnyai attended also another regular Corvinus conference on Internationalisation on 26 January. President Valéria Csépe and programme officer for foreign affairs, Christina Rozsnyai, attended a conference on Central and Eastern European Higher Education Cooperation (CEHEC), organised by Corvinus University and the Central European University in Budapest on 24 April, where they presented the new HAC strategy<sup>7</sup>. On June 22, President Csépe participated at a round table, where she represented the HAC to discuss the state of quality assurance in Hungary, organised in a conference by the Central European University.

The HAC continues its membership in ENQA, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAHE), and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA). The HAC organised the ENQA Members' Forum in Budapest 28-29 April 2016, where the Hungarian Secretary of State for Education presented a keynote address. Outgoing HAC President Ervin Balázs gave a presentation, and the HAC's future, now current, president, Valéria Csépe, was introduced to the ENQA members at the Forum. She, together with the former Secretary General, Tibor Szántó, and Christina Rozsnyai attended the ENQA general assembly 20-21 October 2016 in Gloucester, UK. President Csépe and Christina Rozsnyai also attended the 2017 Members' Forum and General Assembly in Oslo (4-5 May) and Sévres (26-27 October), respectively.

In the annual meeting of CEENQA on 28-29 May 2017, Christina Rozsnyai resigned after 16 years as Secretary General of the organisation. She continues her membership on the Board of ENQA and the Board of the accreditation agency AQ Austria, as well as working as team coordinator for the European University Association's Institutional Evaluation Programme. Furthermore, she was invited to moderate a working group at the conference on joint programme quality assurance organised by FRONTEx in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 30-31 May, where she also gave presentations to the staff of the Lithuanian accreditation agency SKVC on international quality assurance trends.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/eloadasok/Trends%20and%20Challenges\\_CsV\\_RK\\_eloadas\\_20170424.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/web/images/doc/eloadasok/Trends%20and%20Challenges_CsV_RK_eloadas_20170424.pdf)

9. Annexes

Annex 1

HAC tasks and decisions for 2015, 2016 and until 30 September 2017.

Type		Applications supported			Applications not supported		
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Ex ante accreditation of new institutions		0	0	0	0	0	0
Ex ante procedures for VET prog's	initial eval. of education and outcome requirements	0	1	0	0	0	0
	initial accreditation of VET programme	2	3	4	1	2	0
Ex ante procedures-bachelor prog's	initial eval. of education and outcome requirements	1	0	2	0	0	0
	initial accreditation of bachelor programmes	9	16	13	8	17	6
Ex-ante procedures - master prog's	initial eval. of education and outcome requirements	2	1	2	2	1	2
	initial accreditation of master programmes	25	15	6	21	19	9
	single-cycle master programmes	14	10	2	5	8	7
Accreditation of doctoral schools	initial accreditation	2	0	0	3	1	0
	re-accreditation	125	98	5	13	10	3
ex post institutional accreditation		14	12	1	1	2	5
accreditation of bachelor / master programmes in disciplinary clusters		38 / 14	115 / 90	0	1 / 0	15 / 6	0

Type	Applications supported			Applications not supported		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
opinion on applications for professor titles/positions	107	98	95	29	31	22

**Annex 2**

HAC Budget 2016-August 2017

Year	State budget allocation in million HUF	State budget allocation in Euros	Own income in million HUF	Own income in Euros	Total in Euros
<b>2016</b>	190	610 696,8	55	176 780,7	<b>787 477,5</b>
<b>2017</b>	160,6	524 682,3	24 97	89 849	<b>614 537,3</b>