

Approval of the Application by Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB) for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee
12/12/2023

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Application of:	2022-07-20		
Agency registered since:	2018-09-01		
Type of review:	Full	Site visit:	2023-03-28
External review report of:	2023-10-25	Submitted:	2023-11-13
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)		
Review panel members:	István Vilmos Kovács, Matej Drobnič, Nieves Pascual Soler, Sandra Bezjak		
Decision of:	2023-12-12		
Registration until:	2028-10-31		
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Sandra Bezjak		
Attachments:	1. External Review Report (external file), 2023-10-25		

1. The application of 2022-07-20 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2022-09-22.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 2023-10-25 on the compliance of MAB with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering MAB's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:
 - Initial (ex-ante) evaluation of higher education institutions
 - Initial evaluation of programme and learning outcome framework requirements of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes,
 - Initial evaluation of programme and learning outcome framework requirements of Bachelor programmes,

- Initial evaluation of programme and learning outcome framework requirements of Master programmes,
- Initial evaluation of VET programmes,
- Initial evaluation of Bachelor programmes,
- Initial evaluation of Master programmes,
- Initial evaluation of doctoral schools,
- Ex post accreditation of existing higher education institutions in five-year cycles,
- Ex post accreditation of existing doctoral schools in five-year cycles,
- Accreditation of medical schools based on the WFME 2020 standards.
- Renewal of the ex-ante evaluation (registration) of VET, Bachelor and Master programmes
- Ex-post evaluation of VET, Bachelor and Master programmes based of study fields (clusters)
- Integration of ex-post accreditation of doctoral schools into the institutional accreditation procedure

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5. The activity *external evaluation of full professorship applications of technical and vocational education organizations* is not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application inclusion on the Register.

6. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on MAB's level of compliance with the ESG.

7. With regard to the specific European Standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.1 - Consideration of internal quality assurance

8. While the Register Committee concurred with the panel's judgement and found the agency to be compliant with the standard, it highlighted the panel's recommendation that MAB should fully address ESG 1.4 and ESG 1.7 in the ex-ante programme evaluation and in the MAB – WFME accreditation procedures.

ESG 2.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose

9. In its analysis the panel noted that, MAB collects feedback on its methodologies regularly using several means such as questionnaires and group discussions. The Committee concurred with the panel's judgement and found the agency to be compliant with the standard. In addition, it highlighted the panel's suggestion that MAB should continue its efforts to include non-academic stakeholders and international experts in its consultation processes.

ESG 2.4 – Peer-review experts

10. In the last review, the agency was found to be partially compliant with the standard due to a lack of involvement of student panel members in its ex-ante reviews. At that point, MAB expressed a proactive attitude towards changing the status quo and enabling better involvement of students in all of its procedures.

11. The Committee has learned that the planned changes did not take place - MAB had not included student reviewers in its ex ante programme evaluations. The panel noted that the agency plans to involve students in the reviews starting from September 2023 onwards. The Committee, however, was unable to verify whether this change has taken place.

12. In addition, the panel noted that the trainings for the ex – ante procedures are “*absent and insufficient*” (p.43).

13. Taking in consideration the lack of verified information on the involvement of students in the panels and the insufficient training offered to panel members in the ex – ante (programme) evaluations, the Committee was able to concur with the panel’s judgement and found that MAB is (still) partially compliant with the standard 2.4.

ESG 2.6 – Reporting

14. The Committee noted that the procedure for writing a report in MAB includes two steps. First, the two experts, fill in a template, respectively, with their review findings. Second, a consolidated report is published along with the Board’s decision. While the expert review reports are not published, the Committee understood from the report that the agency plans to make these reports public.

15. The Committee welcomed the changes made by the agency towards the full publication of evidences leading to the final decision, but, found that these changes have not been implemented. Therefore, **the Committee concurred with the panel and found the agency to be partially compliant with the standard. The Committee encouraged MAB to submit a substantive change report once it materialises its plans for fully publishing the expert reports.**

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

16. At the time of the last review in 2019, the agency did not have a clear structured and effective complaints procedure. **From the report, the Committee has learned that the agency now has a well established complaints procedure. The Committee was now able to concur with panel’s conclusion and found the agency to be compliant with the standard.**

ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

17. In MAB, students and other stakeholders are involved in the work of the Board and in the discipline expert committees responsible for appointing the review evaluators in the respective study fields. While the Committee

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concurred with the panel's judgement of compliance, it highlighted the panel's suggestion for further improvement namely that the agency should continue working in the recruitment of non-academic stakeholders and to further expand the involvement of students in all of its governance bodies.

ESG 3.3 – Independence

18. In the last decision, the Committee found significant issues in the agency's compliance with the standard due to the increased involvement of the Government in the selection of the Board members, the lack of clear procedures for the selection and dismissal of Board members and lack of mechanisms safeguarding the agency from the Government's interference in its work. The Committee has learned that since the last review, no changes took place in this regard.

19. In addition, from the current external review report, the Committee understood that the involvement of the Government in the work of the agency extends further. For example, the candidate for President is jointly proposed by the Minister responsible for higher education and the president of the Hungarian Academy of Science, the members of the Financial Supervisory Board are appointed by the Ministry responsible for higher education and the members of the Board of Appeals and Complaints appeals committee are nominated by Ministry of responsible for higher education and appointed by the Prime Minister.

20. Taking in consideration the strong involvement of the Government in the selection of members of the various bodies of the agency, which could further lead to infringement of the independence of the agency, the Committee found that the agency is still only partially compliant with the standard.

ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

21. In the last review, MAB's activity in the domain of thematic analysis was limited and insufficiently developed. The external review report demonstrates that in the past 5 years the agency has made several analysis exploring topics such as the perceptions of stakeholders, higher education institutions, students and experts of some of its external quality assurance activities and the logistical aspects of its reviews (composition of review panels, duration of procedures etc.). The agency has also published articles in its own magazine tackling topics on quality assurance in Hungary.

22. The Committee learned that the panel did not necessarily found all of the published pieces to be thematic analysis as understood in the spirit of the ESG. The panel, however, was confident that the agency gathers data and performs statistical analysis of its reviews.

23. Following the improvements undertaken by MAB, the Committee was now able to concur with the panels' judgement and found the agency to be compliant with the standard. It, however, highlighted the panel's recommendation that the agency should exploit the full potential of its data to regularly conduct and publish thematic analysis at system level.

ESG 3.5 – Resources

24. While the Register Committee agreed with the panel’s conclusion and found the agency to be compliant with the standard, it endorsed the panel’s recommendation that MAB should consider the workload of its staff team and plan the assignment of its tasks more carefully.

25. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel’s analysis and conclusion without further comments.

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Conclusion:

26. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that MAB demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Previous decision (2019-04-03)	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.2	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.3	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.4	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
2.5	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.6	Compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.1	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.2	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.3	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.4	Partial compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.5	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.6	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.7	Compliance	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

27. **The Register Committee considered that MAB only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that MAB continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.**

28. The Register Committee therefore approved the application for renewal of the inclusion on the Register. MAB's inclusion shall be valid until 2028-10-31¹.

29. The Register Committee further underlined that MAB is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

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¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.