

GUIDE TO ACCREDITATION

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ACCREDITATION

1. What is accreditation?

The purpose of the institutional accreditation process is to verify and certify that higher education institutions (HEIs) operate in line with the quality assurance guidelines and standards of the European Higher Education Area. Institutional accreditation is intended to provide assurance that the HEI in question functions in line with the ESG 2015 (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area), has a quality assurance system in place which monitors and assesses compliance with the standards on an ongoing basis, and uses the assessment results to actively develop actions and processes to promote implementation of the standards.

The verification is carried out in the framework of the accreditation procedure, during which the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB) supports the preparation for accreditation, advises on the compilation of the institutional self-assessment document on which accreditation is based, assesses compliance with ESG standards and takes a decision on accreditation.

As a result of the institutional accreditation process, the MAB Board will verify and certify the higher education institution by decision, confirming that the institution and its quality assurance system are in compliance with the standards. Institutional accreditation is valid for a maximum of 5 years.

2. What is ESG?

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG provides guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education in order to meet the needs and expectations of students and staff, as well as those of labour market actors and cooperation partners.

3. What is MAB?

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (Magyar Akkreditációs Bizottság – MAB) is a body of experts tasked with the external evaluation of quality assurance (QA) systems of higher education institutions in Hungary operating in accordance with the ESG.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is a national expert board for monitoring, safeguarding and evaluating the quality of teaching, scientific research and artistic activities in higher education.

The key task of MAB is to provide evaluation services to facilitate high standards of learning in Hungarian higher education institutions and to promote quality assurance to support all levels of education and all stakeholders involved.

The MAB works in line with the laws relevant to higher education, performs the tasks assigned to it, meets the ESG 2015 criteria and proceeds in line with the objective, complex and modern guidelines developed by its disciplinary committees and the MAB Board.

Through its activities, the MAB promotes the independence of operations. It applies, develops and/or adapts assessment methodologies conforming to international standards. The MAB's work as an expert, accreditor, analyst and submitter of proposals follows the values specified in the international standards, is based on objective criteria and is independent, unbiased and free from politics. Through all of its activities, the MAB endeavours to solidify the quality culture of higher education institutions in order to improve the standards of Hungarian higher education and strengthen its international reputation.

Throughout its processes, the MAB consistently applies the ESG quality assurance criteria. The MAB performs quality certification services by assessing whether an institution or programme meets the quality criteria specified and published by the MAB in advance. The MAB will grant accreditation to an institution or programme if it meets these criteria.

4. What is the accreditation process at MATE and when?

The whole MATE including each its operational procedure within the scope of ESG will be reviewed.

Furthermore, 3 doctoral schools will be assessed:

- Doctoral School of Economic and Regional Sciences (D71),
- Doctoral School of Mechanical Engineering (D70),
- Doctoral School of Landscape Architecture and Landscape Design (D233)

The procedure will take place between December 2023 and February 2024.

This kind of accreditation process that includes the simultaneous assessment of the operational processes of the whole institute and the processes of the doctoral schools is called integrated accreditation procedure.

5. Who will carry out this accreditation process at MATE?

The Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee elects a Visiting Committee to conduct the on-site visit/online interviews, consisting of professors from other institutions, experienced higher education/quality assurance professionals, representatives of Students' Union and Doctoral Students' Union, and the experts of MAB.

The MAB informs the higher education institution of the composition of the Visiting Committee, which may object to the members within 10 days in case of conflict of interest; in this case, the MAB appoints a new member(s), against whom no further objection may be raised.

The Visiting Committee includes an international expert where possible. The size of the Visiting Committee depends on the size of the institution, the number of disciplines and doctoral schools reviewed and the way the visit is organised.

6. Which organisational unit of MATE is responsible for the preparation for accreditation?

The Accreditation and Quality Committee (AQC) is a permanent body of the Senate, which prepares, analyses and proposes decisions on quality assurance, quality development and accreditation activities in higher education, research and services at the University.

The AQC is responsible for identifying opportunities for the development of the quality system, defining development tasks and coordinating accreditation procedures.

The AQC proposes the University's quality system and the University's quality development program and quality objectives, ensures professional preparation for accreditation procedures (institutional, doctoral schools), and the fulfilment of the monitoring procedures related to accreditation.

The AQC prepares the University's Mission Statement and Quality Policy for approval by the Senate and monitors its implementation. It reviews the institutional development strategy and contributes to the preparation of the review procedure of the operating licence (by the Education Authority).

The operation of the AQC is supported by the Scientific and Quality Secretariat, within which the Accreditation and Quality Working Group is to be highlighted, whose tasks include the preparation for the accreditation procedures of the institute and its doctoral programmes and the organisation and coordination of related tasks. It is also in charge of the annual self-assessment, which is the basis of the accreditation process, as well as professional assistance in the preparation and implementation of the procedure for the review of the operating licence (by the Education Authority).

The Secretariat carries out its tasks under the direction of the Vice-Rector for Science and Quality Assurance, who is also the University's quality manager.

7. Who are involved in the accreditation preparation and self-assessment process?

The accreditation is based on the self-assessment report prepared by the institution, which contains a detailed description of the University's quality assurance system in accordance with the ESG 2015. This self-assessment activity is carried out by professional working groups appointed by the University's management, under the guidance of the Vice-Rector for Science and Quality Assurance, and has been working since February 2023.

These working groups include staff directly related to each ESG aspect, as well as a student representative and, where possible, external stakeholders from the labour market or other interested external partners, or alumni. The aim is to involve a wider range of internal and external stakeholders. The deadline for completion and submission of self-assessments to the MAB was September 2023.

8. Which documents do provide information on the university's quality assurance system, quality objectives and institutional strategic goals?

- Mission Statement
- Quality Policy
- Quality Assurance Rules
- Institutional Development Plan

9. How often is the accreditation process carried out?

Institutional accreditation is valid for 5 years, i.e. an accreditation procedure is carried out at the initiative of the institution at a maximum frequency of every 5 year.

If the MAB Board identifies a partial deviation from the standards or guidelines, or an organisational deviation concerning their adaptation, it may impose a monitoring procedure for the institution (2 years). The purpose of the monitoring procedure is to follow up the identified deviations, to follow up the correction of the deficiencies and to monitor the process improvements. The MAB Board may decide to grant accreditation for a shorter period (2 to 3 years) than the maximum scope of institutional accreditation if it considers that the monitoring procedure is not sufficient to remedy the shortcomings identified.

The last accreditation procedure at MATE (more specifically at its predecessor institution Szent István University) took place in the academic year 2017/2018.

10. What is the process of the accreditation procedure?

On the initiative of the University, a contractual agreement was signed between the MAB and the University (February 2023), which sets out the basic aspects of the accreditation procedure. Subsequently, the institution has started the self-assessment processes according to the MAB guidelines (institutional + doctoral school) and the subsequent preparation of the self-assessment reports.

The Visiting Committee, appointed and invited by the MAB, reviews the self-assessment reports of the institution and the designated doctoral schools, the documents referred to therein, the data and information posted on the institution's website, and conducts on-site visits and/or online interviews at the University at the agreed time and schedule to clarify any issues raised and to obtain further information (Q3/2023-Q1/2024). If the Visiting Committee deems it necessary, it may request additional written information from the higher education institution or the doctoral school before or during the visit.

The Visiting Committee prepares a written assessment report based on the available information, a draft of which is sent to the institution within 60 days of the visit, with a deadline of 10 days to correct any factual errors (numerical errors, dates, names, typos). The MAB Board discusses the finalised draft report and takes a decision on the accreditation of the institution or the doctoral schools.

The decision of the Board may:

- a) support the accreditation of the institution and the doctoral schools for 5 years,
- b) conditionally support the accreditation of the institution and the doctoral schools for 5 years subject to given criteria and a monitoring process, and
- c) reject the application for the accreditation of the institution and the doctoral schools.

In all cases, the assessment report will include the Visiting Committee's proposal for accreditation addressed to the MAB Board, as well as identified good practices and recommendations for improvement. In all cases, the decision of the MAB Board shall include a detailed justification of the decision.

In the case of conditional accreditation, the decision will specify the conditions and the deadlines for correcting the deficiency or submitting a corrective action plan, which may not exceed two years. A conditional accreditation is granted when the MAB Board identifies a minor, remediable deviation from the ESG 2015 standards and guidelines. In such cases, a monitoring procedure will be established to follow up on the identified deviations and shortcomings and to verify process improvements. Failure to meet these conditions will result in the withdrawal of accreditation.

If the decision is rejection, the university may initiate a new accreditation procedure at the earliest one year after the date of the decision.

In the event of ethical, procedural or professional misconduct in the accreditation process, the university may lodge a complaint with the MAB or appeal to the MAB Review Committee within 30 days of the date of the Board's decision.

Following the decision of the Board, the MAB sends the assessment report and the decision to the rector of the institution, the head of the doctoral school and the Education Authority, and publishes it on its website. If the accreditation is successful, MAB sends the institution the certificate and logo and the conditions of use.

11. For what purpose is the accreditation necessary?

Every five years, the Education Authority carries out a review of the operating licences of higher education institutions. This process takes into account the accredited status of the institution and of the courses. For this procedure, it is necessary to have valid accreditation decisions.

12. What are the benefits of accreditation?

The MAB accredited status confirms that our doctoral and postgraduate degrees are equivalent in the European Higher Education Area, i.e. officially recognised in the international labour market. Our graduates' degrees are accredited according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and are internationally recognised.

Remark:

Internal institutional communication: in case of any further questions, comments or suggestions concerning the accreditation procedure, the colleagues in charge will provide information and answers to all interested parties sending an e-mail to akkreditacio@uni-mate.hu