Hungary’s Fundamental law (functioning as the constitution) ensures the freedom of scientific research and artistic creation, the freedom of learning for the acquisition of the highest possible level of knowledge and the freedom of teaching. The State has no right to decide on questions of scientific truth; only scientists have the right to evaluate scientific research. Higher education institutions are autonomous in terms of the content and methods of research and teaching; their organisation is regulated by an act.

Pursuant to the justification of the Higher Education Act (submitted to the Parliament before adoption), the Hungarian higher education system aims, while serving the public good, to transmit competitive knowledge, to ensure the nation’s intellectual and economic development, to provide transparent and competitive theoretical and practical education, to perform basic and applied scientific research and pursue innovation, as well as to educate the new generation of academic staff and researchers. Hungarian higher education institutions promote the high standard of higher education taught in Hungarian language in the Carpathian Basin and worldwide and preserve higher education activities connected with Hungary, the Hungarian language and culture. Higher education institutions are autonomous institutions; their autonomy mainly covers educational and academic activities and research. Their organisational order and operation can be adjusted within the regulatory framework and their management should comply with the Act on Public Finance and the Act on State Property.

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, the core activities of higher education institutions include education, academic research and artistic creation. The educational core activity of higher education institutions extends to include higher education vocational trainings, Bachelor programmes, Master programmes, doctoral programmes and post-graduate specialist trainings. These core activities are undertaken exclusively by higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are responsible for identifying and recognising students with outstanding skills and abilities capable of outperforming syllabus requirements, as well as disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged students, and are liable to facilitate their professional, academic, artistic and sporting activities.

Universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges (non-university higher education institutions) qualify as higher education institutions in Hungary. Universities are higher education institutions authorised to provide at least eight Bachelor and six Master programmes, offer doctoral programmes and award doctoral degrees, provided that at least sixty percent of their teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree, operate students' academic workshops and are able to provide studies in foreign languages in some of their programmes. Universities are authorised to offer programmes in every educational cycle.

Universities of applied sciences are tertiary institutions with at least four Bachelors programmes and two Masters programmes, and with at least two dual trainings (if its accreditation includes engineering, IT, agriculture, the natural sciences or business studies), having at least 45% of their
teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree, operate academic student workshops, and are capable of offering foreign language courses at some of the departments.

**Colleges** are tertiary institutions having at least one-third of their teaching and research staff employed directly or on a public service employment basis have a doctoral degree. Colleges are entitled to operate academic student workshops.

Universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges are also authorised to provide training that do not result in a higher education degree (higher education vocational training, post-graduate specialist training).

In Hungary, higher education institutions may be established individually or with another right holder by the state, a nationality government, a church with legal entity, a commercial entity with a seat in Hungary, and by any foundation, public foundation registered in Hungary, an organisation carrying out religious activity, and in certain cases defined by law, a board of a private tertiary institution financed by an international organisation that exercises the rights of founders and maintainers of the institution. It is the right of the individual exercising founder to undertake tasks in connection with the operation of the higher education institution. The higher education institution is established based on a state recognition by the parliament. State recognised institutions are listed in Annex I. of the Higher Education Act [2]. The Hungarian Rectors’ Conference [5] is entitled by law to represent higher education institutions and to protect their interests.

The government and the minister responsible for higher education play a key role in the governance of higher education; they fulfil tasks related to organisation, development and legality control and, in the case of state higher education institutions, they exercise operator’s rights. Operator control should not affect the autonomy of the higher education institution granted in the matters of the scientific subject and contents of education and research.

The **Educational Authority** [6] is an administrative body established by the government, acting as a higher education registration centre: it registers higher education institutions as well as the start or modification of their activities. It also carries out official inspections and keeps an official register on institutions. Furthermore, it operates the higher education information system (a central system based on data provided by HEIs.)

The **Hungarian Accreditation Committee** [7] is a national expert body promoting the supervision, assurance and evaluation of the quality of higher education, scientific research and the scientific quality of artistic creation, which participates in procedures related to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctoral schools. The **National Doctoral Council** [8] is a body consisting of the chairs of the doctoral councils of higher education institutions, adopting positions in affairs related to doctoral programmes and the conferral of doctoral degrees.

The **Higher Education Planning Board** promotes the link between tertiary education and the labour market. The **Dual Training Council** ensures quality assurance and assessment of the work-based learning component of dual training. The **Council of National Scientific Students’ Academic workshops** is responsible for the national representation and coordination of students’ academic and artistic activities pursued in higher education institutions and the national representation and coordination of the students’ academic workshops movement as well as the organisation of nationwide scientific and artistic forums for students. In Hungary, the national representation of students is performed by the **National Conference of Students**, while the national representation of students pursuing doctoral studies is performed by the **Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Students** [9].
The **three-cycle degree structure**, in accordance with the Bologna Declaration (signed in 1999), was introduced in September 2006.

The multicycle system offers education within the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) at **Bachelor** (BA/BSc) level that lasts for 6-8 semesters (EQF level 6), which can be followed by **Master** (MA/MSc) level courses of a maximum of 4 semesters (except for teachers’ training) (EQF level 7). The third cycle provides **doctorate programmes** (EQF level 8). Prerequisite for participating in a doctorate programme is a Master degree or equivalent. Besides multicycle courses, there are a few study fields where education remained **undivided** (long-cycle) leading to a master degree. Prerequisite for participating in a doctorate programme is a university, or Master degree.

There are also **post-graduate specialist trainings** for graduates holding a Bachelor or Master degree, launched by higher education institutions, which do not lead to another degree.

In addition, there are (short-cycle) **higher education vocational trainings** of 4 to 5 terms provided by higher education institutions which are conditional on the secondary schoolleaving examination and result in an advanced vocational qualification at EQF 5 level. Part of the ECTS credits obtained during this training must be recognised by relevant Bachelor programmes, as provided for by law.

Higher education is governed by a sectoral act and the related government decrees regulating its implementation. These stipulate the most important provisions and rules applicable to the operation of higher education. Several other relevant government decrees and ministerial decrees stipulate partial regulations. Furthermore, various acts on the system of public finances and its sub-systems also apply to the operation of higher education institutions depending on their status and whether or not they rely on public funding.

**The law does not stipulate the structure of the academic year.** It only provides a definition for the academic year as a 10-month period, consisting of term time and (an) exam period(s). The law also defines the semester, which is a 5-month period. Consequently, higher education institutions are free to structure the academic year as they wish. However, since the law specifies all time-related provisions in semesters (e.g. the length of eligibility for state-funded places), it is impossible to structure the year other than in semesters or quadmesters/quarters because it would create difficulties in interpreting or complying with the law as well as the usage of finances. Therefore, most institutions have semesters consisting of a term-time of 14-15 weeks and an exam period of 4-6 weeks. The autumn term usually starts at the beginning of September and ends at the end of January. The spring term usually starts at the beginning of February and lasts until the end of June. Pursuant to the law, in full-time studies, each semester consists of at least 200 classes and full-time education has to be offered on working days, five days a week.