Branches of Study

Hungary introduced the Bologna three-cycle degree structure in pilot projects in 2005 and in all Bachelor programmes in 2006. (These mainly replaced the four /five year long programmes of the former education system) Any higher education institution fulfilling accreditation requirements is entitled to launching a Bachelor programme.

The length and structure of Bachelor programmes are regulated by the Higher Education Act and related government and ministerial decrees, in particular the 18/2016. (VIII.5.) EMMI decree. There are 15 BA/BSc programmes in public and private institutions in the following fields of study (and of the following ECTS credits): agriculture [180+30], humanities [180], social sciences [180], IT [210], law and public administration [180], economics [180], engineering [210], medical and health studies [240], teacher training [240]; sports [180], science [180], arts [180 / 300], art mediation [180]. Religious BA programmes are provided by private government-dependent (church funded) higher education institutions. The National University of Public Service (NUPS) was established by merging of several institutions and faculties. It provides education in the field of Public Administration, National Protection and Military services, however, there is a separate law and a set of government decrees on the NUPS, its programmes and its operation.

A typical Bachelor programme lasts 3 years and is of 180 ECTS credits but in some fields of study there are programmes lasting for 3 and half years (180+30 ECTS) or for 4 years (240 ECTS). These programmes are included in the official list of degree programmes defined in a governmental decree.

In terms of expected outcomes, Bachelor programmes belong to the first cycle of the qualifications system developed for the European Higher Education Area and represents level 6 of the National Qualification Register. (Which is compliant with level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework, based on the Referencing Report approved by the Advisory body of the EQF). These general outcomes (standards) were regulated in a ministerial decree in 2006 in accordance with the Dublin descriptors. The more specific outcomes of each programme (usually developed by consortia of higher education institutions) are in compliance with the outcomes specified in the ministerial decree. Both the specific outcomes of the programmes and the programmes to be launched are accredited. At the time of this report a new piece of legislation is under preparation that updates the output standards (based on learning outcomes) taking the descriptor categories of the Hungarian National Qualification Register into account. This legal act is the result of a year-long cooperation between representatives of tertiary education programmes, external stakeholders, experts of the ministry responsible for higher education and independent experts.

There are no centrally defined regulations on the internal phases of the programmes. However, the framework regulation of the programmes divides the fields of knowledge into two categories (grounding knowledge and vocational knowledge) and allocated credits to them in order to give guidance for programme planning. Furthermore, a legal act sets out that if, within a programme there is an option for specialisation, or module, which may lead to a separate vocational qualification then these modules or specialisations must also be subject to an accreditation procedure.
Admission Requirements

Every Hungarian citizen has the right to undertake studies in programmes fully or partially financed through scholarships granted by the Hungarian state or pay full tuition. **Passing an upper secondary school leaving examination is a general requirement for admission to higher education.** The government defines the secondary school leaving examination criteria for each Bachelor programme.

The higher education institution makes its decision on admission on the grounds of the performance of applicants, based on the standard national ranking in the case of application for entry into higher education vocational trainings, Bachelor programmes and long programmes. **In the case of special programmes and doctoral programmes, the higher education institution shall make its decision in connection with entrance on the grounds of the performance of applicants.**

Applicants for Bachelor studies are not required to sit for an entrance examination; the condition for admission was to reach a certain number of points comprising of upper secondary grades and the grades obtained at the secondary school leaving examination. Higher education institutions offering education in the same programme can also define standard oral examination criteria for each programme.

The government ensures equal opportunities for disadvantaged students, for persons on unpaid leave while nursing their children, for persons receiving parental benefit, child care support, maternity aid, maternity allowance or child care allowance as well as for persons with disabilities and persons belonging to a national minority when determining the number of state-funded places and the entrance examination criteria by allocating places and awarding extra 40 points to such persons in the admission procedure, or exemptions from certain admission criteria.

The government - after consulting higher education institutions - annually publishes the capacity of each institution (that is, the maximum number of students to be admitted) broken down by fields and also the minimum scores required for admission into higher education (as a quality criterion). According to the government decree on admission requirements, only students with scores 240 or above may be admitted to higher education; and students with scores 280 or above to Bachelors or single-cycle programmes. The minister responsible for higher education defines each year the minimum score for admission for the state funded spaces of each faculty. Consequently, the minimum admission score might even exceed 450 in the case of some faculties. A central computerised algorithm ranks the applicants of each programme and, on the basis of the programme's admission capacity (approved of by the minister), it provides a list of successful applicants, which, in turn, determines the minimum score points necessary for entry to the programme concerned.

Applicants may submit their application to more than one institution and/or programme: on their application form, they indicate their preference of the institutions/programmes by ranking them and are admitted to the first one for which their score is sufficient. Students admitted to a study programme - provided that they make a declaration - become eligible for state scholarship.

The admission procedure and admission requirements are regulated in a government decree. Information on admission (including programmes to be launched by institutions and the expected number of entrants) is provided by the Educational Authority (http://felvi.hu [1]), which also handles applications and operates the abovementioned computerised system (calculates the scores of applicants and ranks them). The Educational Authority also records and manages official data. Admission criteria and procedures are regulated by a government decree.

Curriculum

The regulatory framework of the training programmes is not institution specific, but rather focuses on the programmes. **The Minister responsible for Higher Education has determined the exit requirements (expected outcomes) of the first cycle** (in accordance with the generic descriptors of
the EHEA qualifications framework). A regulation framework (description of learning requirements and learning outcomes) is developed for each bachelor programme by consortia of cooperating higher education institutions. These learning requirements and learning outcomes contain the name and credit value of the programme, exit requirements, standards (in terms of learning outcomes), main fields of knowledge to be taught, specific requirements of the final thesis, foreign language requirements, traineeship requirements. The minister responsible for higher education publishes them in a decree and includes the programme in the Qualifications Register. The learning requirements and learning outcomes of a programme are applicable to all higher education institution which wishes to launch such a programme - they can develop the curriculum and programme documentation accordingly.

The institutions elaborate their curriculum based on the training and outcome requirements of the programme and the relevant legal framework. Consequently, the law regulates the minimum number of contact hours per term (200) and the general rules of credit allocation (in accordance with the ECTS). The accreditation guidelines of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee specify the minimum requirements for resources (e.g. minimum number of full-time staff, staff with PhD title, capacity and infrastructure). These regulations have a significant impact on the curriculum and the actual implementation of degree programmes. The programme package (curriculum and programme documentation) is assessed by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee in a preliminary programme accreditation, following which the Educational Authority registers the programme and the programme can be launched.

It is possible to offer degree programmes in a foreign language or develop degree programmes to be launched in a foreign language. However, due to the requirements to be met for accreditation and the insufficient foreign language skills of staff, few higher education institutions actually undertake it; they prefer to launch foreign language mirror programmes of their already existing, accredited programmes, which does not require an accreditation procedure. There are national minority language and culture degree programmes, where the language of instruction is the language of the national minority concerned. (E.g. there are German minority, Croatian minority, Romanian minority, Ukrainian minority, Serb minority, the Slovak minority, the Slovenian minority specializations within the Bachelor programmes of German studies, Slavic studies, Romance languages undergraduate (Bachelor) programmes, for which the language of education is the respective national language and / or the language of the home country of the minority.

**Teaching Methods**

There are no central (governmental/ministerial) guidelines for teaching methods and learning environment - and they are often not regulated at institution level either. As regards learning environment, accreditation requirements contain some infrastructural-technical criteria (concerning the availability of a library, computers, etc.).

It is traditions and established practices that teaching is most often based on. Evaluations of recent years focusing on the introduction of the multi-cycle education system have pointed out that more conscious and deeper changes are necessary in order to improve the quality of the first cycle programmes and to achieve the objectives of the education.

New teaching and learning management methods as well as innovative technology are used at the initiation of individual teachers or teams of teachers, however, according to research studies, they seem to be fragmented and isolated even within an institution.

The characteristics of organising degree courses are closely related to the forms of learning, e.g. sandwich courses and blended learning techniques are more often applied in case of part time courses. It is part of the autonomy of teachers to choose the teaching methods and learning management methods they use and thus usually there are no standardised, across-the-board approaches. Teachers are also free to choose the teaching aids, textbooks and reference books used for teaching. However, during the preliminary
programme accreditation and the institutional accreditation, the list of teaching aids and bibliography is also reviewed. In recent years, several ESF funded projects have been launched for developing and using cutting-edge (usually digital) content with several institutions participating in the development and sharing the end product through a joint, gratis public database.

Due to the massification of higher education, the skills assessment of first-year students as well as offering remedial courses and/or courses of different levels of the same subject are gaining ground. In line with the modification of the Act on Higher Education, tertiary institutions are obliged to carry out competence assessments on students prior to and at the end of their studies. Since the framework and the methodology of this assessment is still unclear, no assessment have actually taken place yet; just some of the institutions attempt to assess students’ competence.

Talent support is also receiving more and more focus. In the network of students’ scholarly circles talented students are involved in research activities and their achievements are presented within their university/college and nationwide. Students’ specialist colleges are self-governing associations based on self-education. Knowledge gained in these forms of learning may be recognised in the ECTS credit system.

**Progression of Students**

Students previously had great flexibility in accomplishing studies, which has been restricted by the new Higher Education Act introduced in 2011. The legislators introduced certain measures to ensure faster progression and to reduce dropout rates and overextended studies.

Such measures include

- defining the length of studies for full or partial state scholarships and
- the expulsion of students who do not complete their studies within the prescribed time frame,
- in which case they are also obliged to repay the state scholarships received.

The impact of these efforts are not yet measurable. Because of lack of interest, institutions only do what is required by the law to encourage students to make progress, and to support students with learning difficulties. However, there is an increasing number of bottom up initiatives focusing on this issue, for example the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference has recently established a task force to elaborate measures aimed at decreasing the number of drop-outs. On the other hand, student unions strive for including all opportunities provided by the law in institutional regulations.

As regards to students’ rights and obligations, the act enables students to obtain the number of credits necessary for their degree in a shorter or longer time than the length of the programme they are enrolled in. Provisions concerning grants/scholarships for students do not have an adverse impact on students progressing slower than the average, but aim at reducing unjustified overextended studies. The state-financed period for obtaining a given degree may be extended by a maximum of 2 terms. The higher education institution may extend the state-financed period of students with disabilities by a maximum of 4 terms.

After that, students can still continue their studies but at a fee-paying place.

Furthermore, the law stipulates that institutions ensure

- that students are granted the opportunity to enrol for optional course units up to five percent of the credits required for the award of the diploma,
- and are offered a range of credit-earning course-units to select from at least twenty percent in excess of the total number of credits required.
students have the opportunity of taking 10% more credits than the total number of prescribed credits of their study regime without having to pay extra tuition fee, and of taking at least 10% of the required credits in a foreign language.

The Act on Higher Education declares that a student’s study duration should not be infinitely long. The higher education institution shall terminate, by unilateral declaration, the student status of the student, who fails to fulfill his/her obligations to progress in studies as set in the study and examination rules and curriculum, fails to apply for the next semester 3 times in a row, or not continue his/her studies after an interruption, as long as the student has been notified in writing in advance to comply his/her obligations within the given deadline, and he/she is also informed about the consequences of the omission. The higher education institution shall also terminate, by unilateral declaration, the student status of a student whose total number of failing remedial and repetitive exams from the same unit is five. (If a student pursues multiple programmes at the same institution, the studies in which he/she has failed his/her obligations should be terminated.)

Underperforming students at state funded places are transferred to fee-paying places. In line with the Act on Higher Education, the student is reclassified to a fee-paying status, if he/she exceeded the number of terms financed by the state (that is defined as the officially determined programme period plus two terms), he/she has failed to obtain at least 18 credits in two subsequent terms, or he/she did not achieve the minimum level of performance (grade average) defined by the institution. Furthermore, if the students withdraws his/her statement that within twenty years after acquisition of the degree, to enter into and maintain employment or other work related status resulting in social insurance with an employer under Hungarian jurisdiction or undertake entrepreneurship under Hungarian jurisdiction (hereinafter: Hungarian employment) for a duration of the period during which he/she received (partial) state grant. The state funded status of underperforming students is filled by fee-paying students with good academic performance.

After accomplishing the first term, it is also possible to suspend one’s studies for a maximum of two terms at one go – and the maximum total length of suspension is regulated by the institutions. Consequently, the institution may give permission to suspend studies for longer than two subsequent terms, or before performing the first term.

The proportion of students progressing slowly or dropping out is significant. Some postpone obtaining their final credits in order to prolong their student status and receiving the benefits attached. Many are unable to get their degree because of failing to pass an intermediate language examination necessary for obtaining a degree. There are only estimates about the extent of dropping out and overextended studies, putting it about 40%. The Educational Authority has started the detailed analysis of dropping out data through the Higher Education Information System (FIR) and is sharing the results with higher education institutions for further action. As a result, it is expected that the opportunities for career tracking and the follow up on subsequent studies will be greatly expanded in the near future, thanks to the development of an anonymous linking technique for administrative data stored on students.

Pursuant to the law, higher education institutions have to provide information and counselling for their students, therefore learning management services as well as study and career planning counselling is offered. The systematic introduction thereof has started, but the degree of implementation varies from institution to institution.

**Employability**

The introduction of the multi-cycle (BA/MA) system constitutes a significant step towards improving employability. Bachelor programmes are expected to be practice oriented and to improve employability. Most of them include obligatory traineeship. In several fields, the usually 6-term (180 ECTS credit) Bachelor programmes were extended with one or two terms (30-60 credits) to include a period of
continuous traineeship of at least one term (30 credits). The traineeship is generally undertaken at external workplaces.

Since September 2015, dual programmes have been offered in the field of engineering, IT, agriculture, natural sciences and business. The main features of these programmes were defined centrally and are based on the cooperation between higher education institutions and the business sector. After term-time, students gain work experience at the companies engaged in the cooperation under the guidance of a mentor. The chances are high to be able to be offered a permanent position upon graduation. The government supports these cooperation programmes by providing targeted grants and tax benefits to the institutions and the involved companies. The Dual Training Council ensures quality assurance and assessment of the work-based learning component of dual training. As a result of the extensive support, both tertiary education institutions and the business sector showed great interest in dual training programmes; however there are still some challenges to overcome: enterprises complain about the inflexible set of rules and require even more support.

Presently there are 24 institutions and 417 enterprises engaged in 37 Bachelor programmes, 1653 students are enrolled (58% in technical fields). The government’s objective is to significantly increase these figures in the coming years and to have 5% of students in STEM fields to be enrolled in dual training.

Presently there are 22 Master programmees as dual trainings, in which 148 students are enrolled.

Career offices have been set up with EU co-funding within regional development programmes. At present there is career consulting service in nearly all universities and colleges. After closing the projects developing the career offices, institutions have to maintain the offices. Career consulting service providers have been quick to develop networks and in-service training and thus have been providing increasingly professional services. Job fairs and other events where students can meet employers are held regularly at universities and colleges.

Hungary has started the introduction of the post-graduation career tracking system. The Higher Education Act stipulates that higher education institutions participate in the national career tracking system and provide data for the system. The methodology and central elements of the system were developed in an ESF funded central project. In addition, several higher education institutions were awarded a grant for developing their own career tracking system, which uses standardised methodology for data collection. This ensures a large sample size for analysis. Multiply elements (questionnaire for new graduates, enrolled students as well as Registered Research Unification of Administrative Data and the Higher Education Career Tracking Moduls) are under development as part of the EFOP-3.4.5. Priority Project in the Educational Authority. Data is regularly collected and analysed in the post-graduation career tracking system concerning the labour market acceptance of graduates as well as the training and employment strategies. The Unification of Administrative Data provides the annual detailed analysis and monitoring of the labour market and income characteristics of students – anonymously. First findings show that a significant part of graduates with a Bachelor degree find employment, a smaller proportion continue their studies in addition to working and only a third of them go on to study for a Master degree.

**Student Assessment**

There is no policy on student assessment at either national or institutional level. Although some institutions have started developing such a policy, it is generally the competence of teachers. Institutions only regulate conditions related to degree thesis and final exam.

Traditionally, oral examinations are held at the end of the terms in the exam periods but where the number of students is high, written examinations and in-process evaluations are also common. In case of small-group classes (seminars, laboratory practice) there is usually continuous assessment of students.

In the 2007 amendment of the Act on Higher Education (introduced in 2005) explicitly refers to the
acknowledgement of non-formal and informal learning for the first time, which is now also included in the present Act. The previous Act had a maximum of 30 credits as the limit for recognising knowledge acquired earlier and work experience, which proved to be too strict. The recently introduced new Act discontinued this provision, and sets out that at least 30% of the credits required for the student to obtain their degree (diploma) - even in the case of the recognition of credits taken in the given institution or in programmes taken earlier, as well as knowledge acquired earlier- shall be obtained in their home institution. Although the main objective of this provision was to prevent students moving from one institution to another for the sake of escaping the performance requirements, but it also facilitated validation and the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal forms of learning.

Research shows that institutions do not have policies for assessing and recognising prior learning; assessment and recognition are within the competence of teachers. In 2010 a central project was launched for developing a formalised recognition procedure and introducing it in institutions. The second phase of the project took place in the period 2012-2014. However the interest of the various stakeholders are still unclear; there is no definitive governmental support policy and no pressure from the students, which would enable a wider usage of validation.

The 5-point scale is the most common form of evaluation (5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - pass, 1 - fail). This scale system is not applied on a relative scale (ensuring that each year about the same proportion of students achieve each score). In fact, the requirements are nearly the same each year, therefore the evaluation is of absolute nature.

Certification

It is the state that defines and recognises degrees through the government and the Ministry responsible for Higher Education. Degrees (and the diploma) can only be awarded by state recognised (accredited) higher education institutions.

Degree programmes are defined by qualification and outcome requirements issued in a ministerial decree. The Higher Education Act regulates the granting of degrees, the conditions to be fulfilled before a final examination and the main elements of final examinations. (May contain several elements, defined by the institution: defence of the thesis, oral exam, written exam, work-based exam). Higher education institutions regulate the way of registration for the final examination, the rules of organising and holding the final examination and the method of calculation the results. They administer the final examination and, based on the results, issue a diploma certifying the degree as well as a diploma supplement. The diploma is a public document, and has to be registered accordingly.