

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Standards for the
Evaluation of Medical Schools Used by

Hungary

Prepared August 2009

Background

In March 1997, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) determined that the accreditation standards used by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC), the accrediting body that evaluates medical schools in Hungary, were comparable to those used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States. Since then, the NCFMEA reaffirmed Hungary's comparability determination in March 2003. During the most recent meeting in March 2009, Hungary submitted a petition for a redetermination of comparability and the NCFMEA voted to defer a determination pending receipt of additional specific information:

- how the health services are provided to foreign medical students, e.g., specifically US students;
- how the HAC addresses the humane care of animals in teaching and research;
- actual examples of institutional self-studies, as well as on-site evaluation visits, especially with respect to Semmelweis University; and
- how the HAC conducts ongoing accreditation monitoring of medical schools during the eight-year recognition period.

Summary of Findings

While the Committee found Hungary substantially comparable with the NCFMEA Guidelines in many areas in March 2009, it requested that the country provide additional information regarding

- how the health services are provided to foreign medical students, e.g., specifically US students;
- how the HAC addresses the humane care of animals in teaching and research;
- actual examples of institutional self-studies, as well as on-site evaluation visits, especially with respect to Semmelweis University; and

- how the HAC conducts ongoing accreditation monitoring of medical schools during the eight-year recognition period.

The additional information clarified that the country has mechanisms in place to ensure that health services are provided and that the country does provide for the humane care and treatment of animals.

However, the Committee may want to further discuss with the Hungarian representatives information that the country submitted pertaining to site visits to foreign clinical sites and monitoring throughout the accreditation cycle. The lack of foreign clinical site visits and a regularly scheduled, systemic accreditation review during the recognition period reinforces that the HAC's approach to these activities emphasizes individual institutional autonomy and responsibility for these activities to a greater extent than does U.S. accreditation.

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Part 2, Section 5.3 (c): Student Health Services

Hungary's Act LXXX reflects that Hungarian citizens, and those from other European Union (EU) countries, receive health services while enrolled in higher education programs. The same law, in Sections 34 (12) and 39, documents how foreign students, from non-EU countries, that pursue a full-time program of study, may obtain health services by paying for health insurance and gain access to health services, including *clinical psychological counseling*. Additional documentation, from the country's Higher Education Act, shows that if an institution fails to ensure the availability of health counseling, it cannot accept students.

Part 2, Section 6.1(a) Humane Care of Animals in Teaching and Research:

Hungary provided evidence of laws and decrees to ensure the humane care of animals used in teaching and research facilities and it appears that Hungary meets the NCFMEA Guidelines in this area. The evidence is found at Act XXVIII of 1998 on the Protection and Humane Treatment of Animals, pages 1-15, and Government Decree No. 243/1998 (XII.31.) on the Undertaking of Animal Experiments, pages 1-19.

Part 3, Section 1: Site Visits

For more information on Hungary's evaluation and oversight of foreign core clinical sites, the NCFMEA requested that the HAC submit self-studies, particularly that of Semmelweis University. Hungary sent the Faculty Self-Evaluation Report from the University of Debrecen's Faculty of Medicine and the Semmelweis University Self-Study.

On reviewing the documents, staff noted that the University of Debrecen's self-study documented rules and regulations that govern sixth year Hungarian medical students' foreign educational experiences. According to the self-study, Debrecen University requires that internships performed outside of Hungary are at hospitals recognized by the University and that the foreign institution confirms acceptance of the students. The self-study further describes how the "arrangement, organization, proper administration and documentation of a hospital practice or internship performed outside Hungary are the responsibility of the applicant (sixth year student)." According to the submission, Debrecen verifies that the foreign clinical experience will conform to the Debrecen medical school's requirements. However, the self-study provided no insight about Debrecen's requirements in this area or any evidence of how the institution reviews the foreign core clinical site or otherwise assures the quality of the foreign core clinical experience.

While the Semmelweis University Self-Study does not address the oversight of clinical experiences outside of Hungary, the university's medical school catalog does. Page 192 from the catalog states:

"[Sixth year] students are allowed to spend their clinical rotation in their home or any other foreign country on the condition that they present prior to their clinical training appropriate and sufficient information about the hospital they intend to work in. The documents have to be approved by the relevant Clinical Departments of Semmelweis University. The documents must include the following information:

- *University affiliation of the hospital*
- *Clinical departments functioning in the hospital*
- *Clinical training programs established in the hospital*
- *Number of inpatients and outpatients cared for per year*
- *Letter of acceptance, with official hospital letter head, name and signature of the hospital officer who is responsible for education and clinical training of students. "*

These rules should be adhered to in order to keep in high esteem the diploma issued by Semmelweis University."

Then, page 208 of the catalog states:

"The University grants students of foreign citizenship the permission to complete internships outside Hungary at a university clinic or teaching hospital preferably in their native countries, in order to enable them to arrange their future employment after graduation. However, students must pay the full tuition fee and all final examinations must be taken at Semmelweis University."

"The professor responsible for the student's instruction during the clinical rotation outside Hungary is requested to give a detailed certificate of the student's performance. It is requested to be done in the Student Handbook! This certificate in the Student

Handbook must be signed by the professor, the Head of the Department as well as by the director of the hospital or the Dean of the University the hospital is affiliated to....Semmelweis University reserves the right to accept a certificate or refuse it in justified cases.”

Hungary does not appear to have a formal policy covering the oversight of the foreign clinical sites, which may or may not be located in a country deemed “comparable” by the NCFMEA¹. Furthermore, the country wrote that it “does not consider it realistic and financially feasible or warranted to conduct on-site visits to foreign clinical sites” because the HAC deemed it primarily a higher education institution responsibility.

In response to the NCFMEA’s feedback during the spring 2009 meeting concerning foreign clinical sites, the HAC has created resolution No. 2009/5/VI/6, which includes:

- “a) The HAC calls attention of medical universities' heads to the fact that the responsibility of controlling foreign practices/part-time studies of their medical students lies with the Hungarian Faculty (University) conferring the medical degree.
- b) The relevant controlling rules and regulations of the Faculties/Universities should be sent to HAC by 31 December 2009.
- c) Medical Faculties are responsible for organizing local site-visits to the foreign training sites. A local site-visit of the foreign clinical sites can only be waived if students are taking part only on elective courses/practicals abroad. (The Hungarian higher education institution may refuse to give its consent to foreign practice in case it cannot acknowledge the credits obtained by the visiting student as part of his/her studies).“

Additionally, upon analyzing the documents scheduled for receipt by the end of the year, the HAC will review its current policy concerning foreign clinical sites. It will also decide on possible further steps deemed necessary concerning affiliation agreements.

The country appears to be moving to increase its oversight of foreign clinical sites, However, the Committee may want to receive additional clarification from the country concerning its use of foreign clinical sites in order to more accurately assess its comparability to U.S. accreditation.

Part 3, Section 3, Re-evaluation and Monitoring:

In its submission for the spring 2009 NCFMEA meeting, the HAC indicated that there is “no accreditation monitoring within the... accreditation period.” Then, in its submission for the fall 2009 NCFMEA meeting, Hungary noted that HAC plans to change its eight-

¹ The Department has determined that if foreign medical sites are in “non-comparable” countries, then students at those locations are ineligible for Title IV aid, regardless if site visits are conducted or affiliation agreements are made. Department officials have determined that as a legal matter for Title IV purposes, NCFMEA's comparability determination regarding a country does not extend to clinical sites in countries that are not currently determined comparable by NCFMEA.

year accreditation cycle to five years. However, regardless of the length accreditation period, the NCFMEA Guidelines require periodic monitoring within the accreditation period.

Hungary identified a number of activities related to how the HAC and/or the institutions monitor individual pieces of the medical education program on an ad-hoc basis. The country indicated that each medical faculty is ISO 9001 certified, but did not explain, or provide evidence of, how the HAC uses the information associated with the certification, systematically, e.g., does the HAC collect, interpret, and make changes to the medical education system based on the information?

The country also acknowledges in the HAC Accreditation Report on General Medicine that it does not have the resources to monitor properly the implementation of all follow-up recommendations. However, Hungary asserts that follow-up activities should be the primary responsibility of each higher education institution, and would be verified in the next accreditation cycle. The country also asserts that moving from the current accreditation procedures to a greater focus on external evaluation will encourage greater emphasis on the follow-up process, but it is unclear what how the focus of the external evaluation will differ from the current procedures used.

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