



Information note

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Update on the Development of the Higher Education Achievement Report

Reason for paper

To provide a further update from September 2009 (I-2009-091) on the work of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group in developing the Higher Education Achievement Report.

Action

For information.

Suggested distribution

Vice-Chancellors and Principals, Pro-Vice-Chancellors responsible for quality, teaching and learning and Academic Registrars.

Executive summary

The paper outlines the ongoing development of the HEAR and institutional trialling, including a second wave of trialling institutions as well as the timetable for reporting back to the representative bodies and wider dissemination.

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Background

Following wide ranging discussions and consultation with the sector and a range of research and evidence, the Measuring and Recording Achievement Steering Group (MRSASG) recommended the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as a way forward to increase the amount of information available on student achievement. The HEAR could also, in the future, provide a potential replacement for the degree classification system.

The final report of the MRSASG (chaired by Professor Sir Robert Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester) recommended that the HE sector trial and then adopt the HEAR as the “central vehicle for recording all university-level undergraduate higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions”. The report provided an initial template for the HEAR in particular drawing upon the European Diploma Supplement. (<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-272.aspx>)

Following consideration of the MRSASG Report, UniversitiesUK and GuildHE invited Professor Burgess to take forward the trialling of the HEAR to ensure that it was an effective and useful tool. The Burgess Implementation Steering Group (BISG) representing HEIs across the UK, the QAA, HEA, NUS and funding councils was established to oversee the trialling and final recommendations for dissemination to the sector.

The HEAR Trialling

A total of 18 higher education institutions have participated in the initial trialling of the HEAR, considering the HEAR template in relation to a limited number of students in Accountancy, Biological Sciences, Creative Arts and English, subsequently being further extended to include Engineering, Medicine and Teacher Education. The 18 institutions are now trialling the HEAR with all their final year students who graduate this summer.

The 18 trialling institutions are:

University of Aberystwyth, University College London, University of Cumbria, University of Derby, University of Gloucestershire, Goldsmiths University of London, University of Greenwich, University of Keele, University of Leicester, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, Newman University College, University of Northampton, University of Northumbria, University of St Andrews, University of Ulster, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, York St John University.

The trialling process has, in particular, considered providing more detailed information about the assessment outcomes of students and information on additional accredited or verified achievement including prizes, skills modules and formal roles such as student union representation. The National Union of Students is represented on the BISG, as are a number of employers. The trialling has also sought to engage with students and employers both through the trialling within the institutions and through national workshops and meetings. Both NUS and a range of employers have reacted positively to the outcomes from the initial trials.

A national conference was held on 4 November with a subsequent event in Scotland and a planned event in Wales. Trialling institutions, students and employers shared their positive engagement with the HEAR. Further institutions were invited to join the trial and an additional 12 institutions will be participating in the next stage of the trial:

Bath Spa University, King's College London, Leeds Metropolitan University, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Aberdeen, University of Bedfordshire, University of Bristol, University of Plymouth, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, University of the West of England.

The Steering Group has also been conscious of the challenges the HEAR will present for student records systems and has, with the support of JISC, been working with vendors of student records systems to ensure that they are aware of and can support the changes needed to implement the HEAR.

Next steps and Timescale

The trialling of the HEAR has been thorough, detailed and positive but the Steering Group is keen that the practical implications of implementing the HEAR across a large and diverse higher education sector are addressed before wider adoption is recommended.

In the final MRSASG Report it recommended sector-wide adoption of the HEAR in 2010/11. The Steering Group has agreed that given the need to ensure that the trialling is complete and that student records systems are capable of implementing the HEAR that it will recommend sector wide adoption from 2011/2012.

The Steering Group is an advisory group to the sector representative bodies, UniversitiesUK and GuildHE and it will be making recommendations, backed by the results of the trialling and appropriate guidance, in Autumn 2010.

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