

CASE STUDY TO SUPPORT HEAR IMPLEMENTATION

The University of Derby

The University of Derby became one of the initial trial institutions in 2008 and has continued as a committed member of both phases of the trial.

All 2009/2010 on campus undergraduate honours degree graduates (c.2,800) have been issued with an electronic HEAR delivered through the Digital System accessed through <https://uverify.derby.ac.uk> (see also <http://www.derby.ac.uk/hear>). From January 2011 the coverage of the HEAR was extended to Foundation Degree and HND students.

The document contains details of student achievement verified by:

Faculties and Departments in the following categories:

- Prizes;
- Study Abroad – dates and institution attended;
- Placement – details of company and dates;
- The Derby Award;
- Employer Mentoring Scheme;
- University roles: Student Tutoring to Young People in Care; Peer Assisted Study Sessions Leader; Study Advisor; Student Support Worker; Student Ambassador; Residential Assistant; Education Liaison Mentor / Assistant.

And by the Students Union in respect of:

- Faculty, Programme and Campus Representatives;
- President, Secretary, Treasurer positions within Societies and Committees;
- Officer Positions such as Democracy Officer, Disabled Students Officer, Mature Students Officer, Ethics and Environmental Officer;
- Editor and publications roles.

A. Institutional Background.

The University of Derby, established in 1992, is the only university in the county of Derbyshire, where it takes a proactive and engaged role in the educational development of the community and local economy working in partnership with schools and colleges, local business and the professions in the region. Although rooted in its region, the University takes a national and global view and has a range of partnerships at home and overseas which ensure that the student body is truly international. It has become a dynamic multi-cultural and flexible organisation committed to widening participation and a high quality learning experience. There are 4 main Faculties; Art, Design and Technology; Business, Computing and Law; Education, Health and Sciences and the University of Derby, Buxton (Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure). The University has one of the most flexible modular schemes in the UK with a choice of joint or combined honours from over 40 main subject areas. There are currently c.23,000 students registered, of which a third are part-time students who can study at all levels and in a variety of modes. A significant number of programmes may be studied entirely on-line or through blended learning and the University offers a wide range of quality Foundation Degrees. 'University of Derby Corporate' is the business-to-business arm providing employers with courses and learning opportunities to meet employee specific skills development in order to enhance business performance.⁶

B. Purposes in participating within the trial.

On receipt of the invitation to join the trial, the Vice Chancellor met with the Registrar to discuss possibilities. There was a desire to be positive and at the forefront of the initiative, to become an early adopter to provide students with an additional employability tool and to have an influencing role in the development of the HEAR. The Registrar, June Hughes attended the 'start-up' meeting. The importance of student employability as a driver has always been of great prominence and the work with the Student's Union within the HEAR development has shown great benefits. There was always the intention of providing the document electronically to put the University's students ahead of others.

C. Your 'structural' starting points Transcript, DS, extra-curricular awards/provision; SRS, data held centrally (e.g. in respect of module marks).

The University already provided the Transcript and Diploma Supplement, in the form of paper documents, to all undergraduates and postgraduates. All information for this was held centrally, including marks at sub-module level, although the simple division of such marks into one of two categories (coursework and examination) meant that it was not seen as worthwhile to report at this level; instead each document only provided an overall module mark. In contrast, information in respect of non-academic achievement, including the 'Derby Award' was held on a distributed basis by Careers, within Faculties, Student Wellbeing, the Student Employment Agency, and Marketing and by the Students Union. The Careers Service also held information on employer mentoring of students.

The exception to the non-academic information held on this basis was information in respect of academic prizes, which was held centrally.

D. Your 'people' starting points – who was involved from the outset (e.g. Registry, IT, Careers and Employability, Learning and Teaching) how, and why?

The University established a Steering Group, chaired by the Senior Assistant Registrar with a deputy (Head of Student Systems and Operations - Deputy Academic Registrar), and reporting to the Academic Board. The latter agreed the principles for the development including approval for the inclusion of student roles. The former has included representatives from IT services, academic representatives, the Students Union, Careers Service, student support (Student Wellbeing) and Student Support and Information Systems, with the Project Lead being taken by the Assessment and Awards Manager. In addition an operational group involving all administrative, IT and Student Union staff who would be involved in the system development, data collection and input and testing was established. Core staff in respect of the development were based within Registry, (Assessment and Awards Unit) and IT Services, with resource being provided for the Students Union in order to enable them to develop systems to ensure information was of appropriate quality to enable verification for inclusion within the HEAR, and to facilitate the transfer of such information into the Student Records System (Oracle Campus Solutions (PeopleSoft)).

E. What key actions did you take toward implementation, and in what sequence?

Given the starting points key actions were:

- The development of protocols and strategies for the addition of non-academic data into the SRS for inclusion in the HEAR. The Steering Group recommended criteria to govern such entries to the Academic Board for approval, with particular attention paid to issues of diversity and the need to ensure such approved opportunities are open/available to all (though with reference to particular programme requirements as necessary);

- To develop the necessary IT infrastructure, including the relationship with Digitary. This, which reflected the steer from the national Implementation Steering Group that electronic documents were highly desirable, was funded by institutional Project Development funding. This enabled the construction of fields within the SRS to hold the relevant data (including that supplied from the SU in respect of the roles defined on page 1 above) and enable reports to be written which, via an XML template, can be exported into Digitary. Some external developer time was needed for final part of this work, and a new server has also been purchased. The information is held within the University and badged as such, but using a system 'powered by Digitary'. With associated costs, expenditure has been of the order of £50,000 including the Digitary cost but the management of the project was absorbed, a management overhead for registry and IT and testing would potentially have added another £30,000. Some of this has been offset by saving in the production of previous paper documents and is expected to make savings in other areas in the future;
- Data collection was backdated to previous year where possible so that first issue students had the information of prizes, previous year study abroad and placement on their HEAR. Current year collection of this data also ensures that the following year graduates will have three year's data.

F. What have been the reaction(s) of a) students; b) employers; c) academic staff; d) administrative staff to your work?

In respect of students, initial feedback has indicated:

- Highly positive support from the Students Union, who have played a full and active role in the development of entries for the HEAR reflecting non-academic achievement, and for submitting entries for the HEAR;
- Limited support from student focus groups, with some regret that students did not know about the initiative earlier, alongside the desire expressed for the inclusion of a tutor testimonial within the HEAR. The former issue will be followed up by the provision of information about the HEAR at induction;
- Limited use by those leaving with a HEAR following the awards ceremony in January 2011 and subsequently surveyed via an online survey. This may have reflected the fact that the initiative had not been publicised beforehand, leaving many unsure as to the purpose of the document, and also that many had gained employment prior to graduation, which reinforced the need for access to the HEAR at this time.

An early focus group with **employers** suggested that blue-chip companies with sophisticated online systems were unlikely to make use of the HEAR directly (a view that accords with that of the Implementation Steering Group that the HEAR is primarily a document for student use). SMEs did however see value in the document as offering one basis for discussion at interview.

Due to the data being held centrally the involvement of **academic staff** so far has been limited, though a contribution to the Institutional Learning and Teaching Conference in the summer is planned. The focus of PDP within the curriculum will identify anything that fits with the HEAR. Contributions to meetings of the Student Records Officers Conference (SROC) and the Northern Universities Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (NUCCAT) have been well received however. In terms of **administrative staff**, Secretaries to Examination Boards are aware of the certification issues, and others have been trained to enter appropriate data once verified.

G. What lessons have been learned through the process which may be useful to institutions getting started?

Key lessons in supporting the process of implementation have been:

- Having support from the Vice Chancellor and the Student's Union gives licence to take through the Institution;
- The need to keep processes simple and straightforward in the first instance, and build additional functionality as you go;
- The importance of working through the issues in respect of data for the HEAR with the Students Union in detailed ways;
- The need to establish a Steering Group at an early stage.

H. Your Future Plans for HEAR development.

Looking to the future, key actions will be to:

- Extend the range of non-academic information included as HEARs come to reflect the full student lifecycle;
- In respect of non-academic information only, to further develop a student summary screen to enable students to view the data held prior to publication, and enable them to ask for entries not to be published as appropriate;
- Develop processes for the automated input of data, such as that related to placements outside of the credit bearing curriculum, onto the central SRS;
- Raise awareness of the HEAR through Personal Development Planning modules and via 'Skillbuilder', an institution-wide scheme to support and highlight the development of skills and capabilities relevant to employment and which identifies which development opportunities, appropriately completed, will result in HEAR entries;
- Undertake further graduate surveys to monitor the use being made of the HEAR;
- Produce interim HEARs at the end of each stage of study.