



## **The Higher Education Achievement Report: an update on implementation**

**Produced by the Centre for Recording Achievement based upon evidence provided from institutions and others with an interest in HEAR implementation.**

### **Key messages:**

- A. The overall extent of implementation across the sector is difficult to determine, though the evidence we have supports the view that the number of HEARs issued continues to grow.
- B. The majority of institutions have already, or are in the process of, providing access to HEAR data while students are on programme, and this is associated with increased student engagement with the HEAR.
- C. There is evidence of a substantial increase in the number of HEAR 'shares' and the 'viewing' of such HEAR data by third parties. However, with employers in particular, this remains ad-hoc and student led, with limited numbers of HEARs involved and no current evidence of systematic use.

### **In more detail:**

Five years after the Final Report on the HEAR trial process and the recommendation to implement HEAR across the UK HE sector<sup>1</sup>, what do we know about the current position?

This update has been challenging to compile for the following reasons:

1. There is no formal requirement to report on the implementation of the HEAR.
2. HEAR implementation can support institutions in addressing a range of institutional agendas, including the production of richer records of student achievement, employability, student support and development and community engagement. Each of these may involve different leadership within an institution, which can make securing a comprehensive picture difficult.
3. Because HEARs are issued in a variety of ways, using third party providers and directly from institutional Student Records Systems, there is no central repository through which progress can be consistently documented. Furthermore, such systems provide data on HEAR collation and use in different ways.

Despite this, we can identify a number of key themes in respect of implementation. These are as follows:

- A. Responses to an earlier comprehensive survey undertaken on behalf of the HEAR Advisory Group (CRA, 2013) indicated that almost 100 institutions, across all mission groups, had done so or were in the process of doing so. More recent survey data are

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hear.ac.uk/sites/default/files/HEAR-Bringing-it-all-together.pdf>

mixed, with that provided by the UK Credit Forum, (2017) reporting that 21 of the 48 respondents (43%) to their survey stating that they provided a HEAR, and leading to the conclusion that while the HEAR has had a significant impact it is not yet the dominant mechanism for recording students' final outcomes. This position might itself be still evolving; the most recent HEA survey (2017) indicated that, of 52 institutional responses, 27 were not currently operating the HEAR but more than half of these reported they were planning to do so in the future.

- B. The challenge provided by limited responses to recent surveys notwithstanding, the number of HEARs issued in total is growing across the sector. One third party provider reports that the number of HEARs issued in 2016 (the most recent year for which complete data are available) has doubled since 2014. We currently estimate that over three million HEAR records have been issued since 2012, and that some 25% of these include detailed section 6.1 entries<sup>2</sup>. A second third party provider confirmed that: *'we have also seen some clients move away from producing transcripts as a qualification document, with the HEAR serving as the only definitive record of course module results.'*
- C. The majority of institutions have already, or are in the process of, providing access to HEAR data while students are on programme – so it might be used formatively - as well as upon graduation. Such a development is associated with increased student engagement. Drawing upon data from third party providers in particular, evidence suggests that institutions issuing only a 'final' HEAR to graduates, typically post-graduation, receive on average a level of engagement in the low 20% range compared to an average of 50% for those institutions that implement an ongoing/formative HEAR, and where the issuing of a formative HEAR is connected to the enrolment process, student engagement rates of above 80% are experienced<sup>3</sup>.
- D. Securing greater employer and other 'end user' understanding of, and access to HEAR data, remains a key priority. Evidence from one institutional investigation<sup>4</sup> supports the view that, across the employment spectrum:
- awareness of the HEAR remains low;
  - once awareness is increased, there is a positive response to the value it can provide to support the recruitment process for both applicant and recipient.
- E. There is, nevertheless, evidence of an increase in the number of HEAR 'shares' and the 'viewings' of such HEAR data across third party providers and from information provided by individual institutions. Specifically:
- There is good evidence of substantial use of HEAR records to support applications for postgraduate study, both within the UK and internationally. One institution reported

---

<sup>2</sup> The section of the HEAR devoted to achievements recognised by the institution which do not attract academic credit, such as additional awards related to employability or volunteering, or academic and professional prizes.

<sup>3</sup> This varies across institutions; one institution issuing formative and final HEARs reporting 53% of current students - and 58% of alumni - had used their third-party accounts, a second that over 95% of students registering with their third party provider by the time they completed their degree programme, and a third reporting 85% student engagement with Section 6.1 of their HEAR, which includes entries built up over the student life cycle within the explicit context of an institutional employability framework..

<sup>4</sup> Magill, J (2017) Higher Education Achievement Report: employer perspectives of the HEAR (currently unpublished).

that 57% of their HEAR 'shares' have been made with other universities in relation to the pursuance of further study. One third party provider indicated that the HEAR has been verified by educational providers from Canada, Finland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, USA, Estonia, and Pakistan.

- Such use includes institutions who do not currently issue the HEAR themselves. In one such case a major non-issuing UK institution has received in excess of 1,000 shared electronic HEARs in support of applications to their PG programmes.
- An increasing number of 'blue-chip' employers are accessing final HEAR records to check outcomes at the stage of confirming offers of employment. Over 1,000 employers have been provided with such access as of the present time. Recognised brand name recruiters who have received HEARs electronically include Accenture, JP Morgan Chase and Co, PWC, Deloitte, Google, NHS, Barclays, Allen Overy, Lloyds, ICAEW, McKinsey, Dubai Health Authority, Arup, Freshfields, EY, CIMA, Sky, KPMG, Slaughter and May, Ministries of Defence (UK and international), Santander, RBS, Clifford Chance, Capita Group, Local Government throughout the UK, National Grid, Grant Thornton, Citi Group, TeachFirst, Linklaters, UBS, Motorola, PA Consulting, Qatar Airways, HM Treasury, Network Rail, Bentley, Ranstad, Haliburton, Rolls Royce, Credit Suisse, Pfizer, Siemens, Royal Bank of Scotland, the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission, Blue Arrow Recruitment, Manpower, and Amazon. However this remains ad-hoc and student led, with limited numbers of HEARs involved and no current evidence of systematic use by such employers.
- To date, where systems permit over 200,000 students who have given permission have been matched to potential employment opportunities of interest. This figure has doubled during the period October 2016-October 2017<sup>5</sup>, though with a substantial degree of variation across institutions<sup>6</sup>. In addition, over 10,000 applicants have made use of HEAR data in populating a graduate vacancy offered by an employer.

Those institutions that continue to issue the Diploma Supplement alone may wish to note the recent European Commission Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level<sup>7</sup> which specifically references the e-HEAR (p40).

---

<sup>5</sup> i.e. 100,000 up to October 2016, a further 100,000 from October 2016-October 2017.

<sup>6</sup> One institution reported that, while this service was still in the relatively early stages of development, as of March 2017, 233 applications had been completed and submitted to employers from students. In contrast, a University with more than double the student numbers reported 'little interest in sharing the HEAR electronically with third parties with only 29 shares recorded.'

<sup>7</sup> EU Publications (2017). At <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1ae19aac-6a9a-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>