

Higher Education Achievement Report and third sector employers

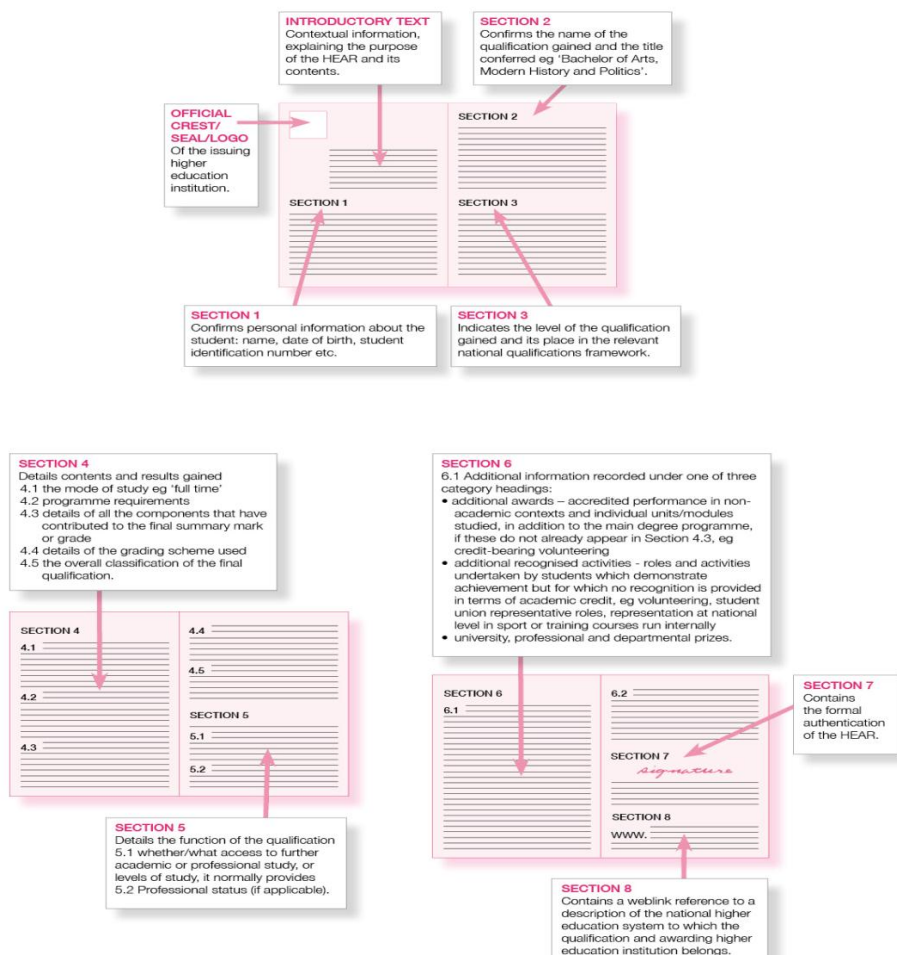
www.hear.ac.uk



- “Although we recruit graduates, we don’t particularly look for graduates – or formal educational qualifications in the main - because we’re looking for specific skills and experience – and evidence of what the applicant has been involved in. It’s up to them to communicate this and provide us with a tangible basis for employing them.” (Large third sector organisation)
- “The HEAR will be helpful. The additional information it contains will be extremely useful in our recruitment process.” (Large third sector organisation)
- “We can see benefits to students as an aide memoire in making their application and to us as an organisation in providing us with greater details. As the HEAR becomes more pervasive we will ask candidates to append Sections 4 and 6 to their application.” (Large third sector organisation)
- “As an employer, you need proof of the candidate’s claims, the ability to verify HEAR information quickly and easily will be very helpful.” (Large third sector organisation)

The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is an electronic document that may help in recruitment processes by showing in detail, and in a form verified and signed off by the university, some, at least, of what a graduate has achieved during their time in higher education. Employers who make use of such information in their selection processes will, therefore, be able to make more informed decisions about the people they choose to become part of their businesses. The HEAR will be built up and available throughout a student’s career in higher education, and can be used as an aid to selection in intern, placement and graduate recruitment and as a starting point for professional development in the workplace. All HEARs follow a clear and standardised template.

At-a-glance guide to the HEAR (click on the image or visit www.hear.ac.uk/about)



How will third sector employers engage with the HEAR?

The third, or voluntary, sector is large and diverse. Thousands of these organisations undertake work in pursuit of social goals, as opposed to profit, across the UK. A number of general observations have been drawn from discussions with large and small employers, about how they might use the information contained in the HEAR. Despite their different sizes and aims, there were many congruent points.

Many third sector employers consciously and explicitly consider their staff an asset to be developed. In common with many such employers (with the exception of professional and specialist posts), neither employer interviewed seeks formal educational requirements stating that 'we're interested in the person in the round'. This is a typical disposition in the third sector characterised as 'it's about them [their staff] as well as the organisation'.

The HEAR has the potential to add value to recruitment processes in the third sector:

By being highly relevant to employers

Third sector employers welcome the HEAR's introduction. They can immediately see the relevance of the additional information contained in the HEAR to their own recruitment processes. Rather than formal qualifications, these employers are often far more interested in knowing what applicants can do and what activities they have been involved in. However, since they are also considering candidates with experience who do not have degrees, the HEAR is just one form of 'evidence' of a candidate's experience and skills they will use.

By using parts of the HEAR early in the recruitment process

Many (though not all) employers in other sectors will not expect to see the HEAR itself, but third sector interviewees indicate that, once the HEAR becomes embedded practice, they will invite applicants to append Sections 4 and Section 6 in hard or electronic copy to the application.

By augmenting and contextualising the degree classification with additional information

The degree classification, and indeed the degree itself, is of limited importance to many of these employers. They recruit graduates but many do not specifically seek graduates. Even those that do recruit graduates often do not specify a degree subject because the skills and experiences gained are more important.

By stimulating better applications

In the third sector it is particularly important that the applicant can communicate their knowledge skills and attributes and provide their potential employer with a tangible basis for the decision to employ them. As well as detailing and verifying activities such as volunteering, that are particularly relevant to this sector, the HEAR will be useful in helping graduates remember and articulate their skills.

By forming the basis for induction and staff development of new employees

Being staff-focussed these employers see the potential for using the HEAR to contribute to a starting point for staff development for new employees. One expressed disappointment in what it sees as limitations to the HEAR because 'it stops' but learning doesn't – or shouldn't.

By yielding time and cost savings at the reference checking stage

Employers consider the facility for electronic verification of a candidate's information, offered by the HEAR, to be very attractive.

This briefing has been prepared from the findings of a small-scale research project, sponsored by the Higher Education Academy, to consider the ways in which a range of different types of employers may use the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) in their organisations and circumstances. It is based on in-depth interviews with postgraduate admissions offices and aims to provide those who will benefit from the introduction of the HEAR with key messages from emerging practice.