

CASE STUDY TO SUPPORT HEAR IMPLEMENTATION

Newman University College

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

The institution plans to provide HEARs for all graduating/Completing students. This will include Foundation Degrees, Initial Teacher Education programmes and Combined and Single Honours Programmes.

A. Institutional Background.

Newman University College was founded in 1968 and is named after our patron, Blessed John Henry Newman, who was a Cardinal of the Catholic Church and Beatified in September 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI.

All full-time degrees have a work placement module and an important part of the curriculum is developing transferable skills useful for further study or employment after graduation. Many of the courses at Newman are developed in consultation with employers to ensure the course content is relevant and provides transferable skills valued by graduate employers. Newman has one of the best graduate employment rates of UK universities and was ranked in the top 20 in The Sunday Times University Guide 2010. Programmes include Initial Teacher Education at both undergraduate and PGCE, together with an extremely popular GRTP programme route. Newman University College offers a range of Single Honours Programmes, as well as an extensive Combined Honours programme, which currently has some 123 different routes running. A number of the single honours programmes also include professional accreditation including National Youth Agency Accreditation, BPS and BASES.

A range of part time programmes are offered including a number of Foundation degrees such as Early Years, Teaching Assistants and IT and Management. Short courses in Counseling and independent awards such as Chartered Management Institute and Cisco awards are also incorporated into programmes. A number of Masters programmes including Education, Clinical applications in Psychology and Sport Science are also offered. Newman University College also acts as a collaborative partner to a small number of both HE and FE partners and validates a number of awards from levels 4 to 7.

B. Purposes in participating within the trial.

Newman University College wished to be involved for a number of reasons. In institutional terms there has been a strong fit with institutional planning at a strategic level, strongly supported by the previous and current Principals, and based upon:

- the desire, in a regional and diverse institution with high proportions of widening participation/first generation HE and a number of minority ethnic students (particularly from within the Muslim community) to effectively represent the range of achievements of students (both academic and non-academic). Given the range and diversity of provision the institution wished to ensure that the HEAR was suitable for all its graduating students;
- a good fit between the aims of the HEAR and moves toward emphasising more holistic representations of graduate achievements, specifically in respect of 'the Newman Graduate', which mitigates against any sense of curriculum fragmentation and makes clear the range of student study/achievement which may otherwise be hidden by a simple recourse to degree title.

More broadly, the institution was concerned to ensure:

- that, as a small establishment with a highly centralised administration system, it could provide a counter point to other larger institutions;
- whether the necessary investment of both resources and people would be possible for a small institution and;
- that it might offer constructive commentary so as to ensure the HEAR is appropriate for smaller as well as larger institutions.

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

The institution started out with two advantages:

- since 2005, the current transcript has met all the Diploma Supplement requirements under the Bologna Agreement;
- the central database held data at sub-module level in terms of assessment, meaning that it was easy to 'drill down' in respect of assessment details, even though such detailed information did not appear on earlier Transcripts.

Conversely the institution does not currently award prizes, and currently has no plans to do so. It was therefore helpful that Steering Group confirmed that those institutions who did not wish to award prizes may use a standard statement to this effect.

With regard to other aspects of section 6, no extra-curricular award was available when the HEAR development began, but the work has catalysed developments in this area, specifically in terms of validating student representative roles for academic credit, (whether contained within the degree structure or as additional credits), beyond the current arrangements for verification considered below.

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

As well as the key personnel identified below, a range of working groups were set up to consider different sections of the HEAR, with a number of key members involved in all working groups.

Key Personnel:

- Management Information Systems/Student Records;
- Examinations Manager;
- IT Services;
- Careers Service;
- Student Union.

Working Groups:

- Academic Colleagues;
- Support Services Colleagues;
- Students;
- Section 4 working group¹;

¹ Including a range of colleagues representing subject areas, support services, careers, Student support and a number of students.

- Section 6 working group²;

Each of these has been consistently engaged and important throughout.

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

- Given that most of the data required to implement the HEAR was already held centrally, the major concerns were with sections 4 and 6 of the form, dealing with academic and additional information respectively. The emphasis in respect of the former was concerned to ensure the inclusion of programme aims (required in Programme Requirements) in the HEAR. This information is held in word and PDF format as part of the programme specification, but could not be easily transferred to the relevant fields on SITS electronically;
- A further complication lay in the different lengths of current programme aims, and particularly where students are taking combined honours and two sets of outcomes would be required. To address this academic staff were asked to provide a summary for their subject where it forms part of a programme using a word length developed by a working group, thereby developing a consistency of information without being too restrictive. These having been received, the next stage is to add the text into SITS prior to final testing;
- In respect of Section 6, phraseology for entries have been agreed and a system put in place to provide a quality assurance and audit mechanism which will be available should students wish to challenge entries. Students will have the opportunity to ask for entries not to be displayed here, but the institution is seeking to limit risk, e.g. by identifying that the student performed a role within a student society but without naming the society involved. In addition, students will be able to ask for additional entries providing criteria are met and entries formally agreed;
- At all stages of development, formal reports have been presented to the deliberative committees of the University College and approval required for the different actions taken along the way. Regular reports - for information and update - have been provided to:
 - Learning and Teaching Committee;
 - Academic Standards Committee;
 - Programme Assessment Boards;
 - APL and Transfer Committee;
 - Academic Board;
 - Newman Management Group (comprising all members of the University College Directorate, the Deans of Schools and the Directors of Services).

Approval to set up working groups, take actions and undertake the necessary collection of data has been given by Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board.

All the deliberative committees of the University College include Academic and support colleagues as well as student representation, and the Academic Standards Committee and Learning and Teaching Committee are chaired by the Vice Principal and Academic Board by the Principal.

With the cross-over of colleagues involved in various committees and groups, it has been possible to ensure communication is provided across the institution at regular intervals and has ensured considerable commitment to the project across the University College.

² Including a range of colleagues representing subject areas, support services, careers, Student support and a number of students.

More detailed information regarding the stages of implementation is provided in Appendix A, and information relating to the request to staff to summarise programme aims in Appendix B.

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

At all stages of development formal consultation has been undertaken with academic colleagues, support staff, students and employers, and this has been a very positive process. It has been particularly important to ensure that different support areas, especially student support and Careers have been involved, as have both IT Services and the Management Information Team in relation to the technical aspects.

Students from across a broad range of programmes, levels and modes of study have been consulted, (with care taken to ensure representation from minority groups), and have provided excellent suggestions and picked up points for consideration which might otherwise have been overlooked. In addition considerable and very positive support has consistently been received from the Student Union Executive and it is planned to work together with the Executive and the Information Officer in developing information for students enrolling in September 2011 in relation to the HEAR. Furthermore the Students Union, with support from the Careers Advisory Service, will administer the volunteering programme (which currently involves more than 50% of students in some form)³, and will provide verification in respect of volunteering activities for potential incorporation into the HEAR.

It is also intended to provide graduates with a short questionnaire on the HEAR when issued, for their initial response and intentions re use, and then follow up with a second questionnaire to go out with the standard Destination of Leavers survey to seek their views 6 months on, particularly in relation to job hunting.

Academic colleagues have also been consulted widely and the HEAR working groups have endeavoured to ensure a wide spread of representation including professionally accredited programmes, collaborative provision, part-time and M level as well as Initial Teacher Education programmes. There has been substantial evidence of staff engagement with the initiative, evidenced by participation in working groups, which have been over-subscribed, and by positive responses to the request to provide summary Programme Aims (see the request in Appendix B below, entries from over 90% colleagues having been received in good time). Some concern has been expressed in respect of the inclusion of results that do not count toward the degree or where performance has been unsatisfactory, but a decision has been taken to include these at present.

An initial survey was undertaken with regional employers in 2009, using a draft HEAR and seeking comment on the most important aspect of the HEAR for employers and what uses they saw for the HEAR. The programme aims and module details were highlighted unanimously as the most relevant and useful sections. A further questionnaire was provided in 2011, and the outcomes were very similar with employers feeling in particular that the details of the awards, including module details and programme aims were the most useful elements. There is some suggestion that wider achievements may become more significant when employers, particularly in the public and charitable sectors, have a developed understanding of these through discussion with applicants for employment.

³ Initial concerns that section 6 would be of relevance to only a minority of students, and that those from particular cultures would be excluded from such extra-curricular activities, have not materialised, indeed the opposite has been found to be the case.

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

In implementing the HEAR, the key challenges to implementation have been to:

- Ensure understanding of the purpose of the HEAR and seeking consultation from all relevant groups;
- Deal with technical issues in relation to the different areas where information is held;
- Ensure all details on modules are drilled down and some academic colleagues discomfort with this level of information for level 4 (where it does not contribute to the award);
- Estimate and respond to the potential costs of administering, printing and storage, whilst recognising that these will be offset by savings through electronic communication with students.

Key points in supporting the process of implementation have been to:

- Use key players across working groups and communities to ensure continuity;
- Make effective use of senior level management support for process⁴, and an existing positive relationship with the Students Union;
- Ensure key lines of authority and overall decision making powers;
- Ensure communication updates are provided regularly;
- Discuss, inform and promote the HEAR at all times (being a small institution helps in this regard);
- Have a named project manager to oversee the developments;
- Encourage institutional ownership.

H. Your Future Plans for HEAR development.

Looking to the future:

- The working group will continue to meet to provide guidance on the processes of verification for Section 6, together with details of how students may challenge what is held in Section 6, or seek its removal;
- Work is under way with the Students Union, the Information Officer and Marketing to ensure consistent information is provided both to applicants and enrolling students in relation to the HEAR;
- Arrangements for electronic storage of records will be developed, to include direct links to relevant module handbook and additional electronic information, including potential student portfolios (through Mahara).

One important additional benefit has been to enable the institution to look at aspects of provision, such as wider achievements, in which it had an interest but for which no formal mechanisms to offer recognition were currently available. In addition levels of interest from Headteachers in the HEAR in respect of NQTs is moving toward confirmation that additional references may prove to be unnecessary in this context in the long term.

⁴ Consistent senior management support and continuity of staff engagement are particularly crucial.

Appendix A: the detail of Implementation:

Developments 2009

Following meetings with the Examinations Manager and the Head of MIS, an initial manual HEAR was produced and discussions with the Technical HEAR group were undertaken by the Head of MIS.

A Working Group of academic and support colleagues was convened and met to consider the initial draft HEAR and to provide comment on the developments to date. A focus group of students was also convened to consider the draft HEAR and to provide comments on developments. Both groups had similar views on a number of elements of the draft HEAR and in particular recognised the potential difficulties inherent with section 6 (additional information)⁵.

A trial using a number of relatively small cohorts (Combined Honours English with Psychology, ITE Primary (3 year programme) and FD teaching Assistants) was undertaken using the final transcripts and creating the HEARs from templates in word (enabling the pasting of relevant programme specification elements). The elements for each module were also included and, whilst a copy of live student data was used, no student received a HEAR. Using this manual system to create a HEAR meant that some 51 HEARs took 1.5 days to produce using one member of staff full time. Using the same methodology for all finalists for July 2010 was therefore estimated to take around four working weeks to produce.

Subsequently the following further actions were undertaken:

- Further meetings and work with MIS, Examinations and Assessments and the Quality Office regarding data requirements, and how to ensure all information currently held on SITS required to be included is included in the HEAR;
- Further work on auditing Modules handbooks, in order to ensure consistency and clarity;
- Training of further colleagues in Quality Office for Module amendment and update on the CAMS (SITS) system to assist both Exams and Assessments and MIS colleagues;
- Liaison with JISC to ensure details of the technical specification are received as soon as possible and to liaise with other Tribal users regarding the software requests to be made to the vendor;
- Further meetings with the Union of Students to be held to consider how best to disseminate information on the HEAR to students for 2011 entry;
- The provision of guidance on the purpose and various sections of the HEAR for both staff and students.

Developments 2010

Discussions have taken place with both colleagues from Examinations and Assessments and Student Records and draft templates in line with the guidelines have been produced. Fields have been identified on our existing Student Records System (SITS) which will enable us to include all the necessary information required for the HEAR and much of the information required is already held on SITS.

The largest task remaining for the institution in order to meet the July deadline was the inclusion of programme aims (required in Programme Requirements) in the HEAR. This information is held in word and PDF format as part of the programme specification, but could not be easily transferred to the relevant fields on SITS electronically.

⁵ Though this largely proved unfounded as the process developed

A further complication lies in the different lengths of current programme aims, and particularly where students are taking combined honours and two sets of outcomes would be required. For example students completing Combined Honours Psychology with English would have over thirty programme aims listed for the two elements on their HEAR. In light of this, and in line with the HEFCE requirement for programme aims to be available on HEI websites, the Academic Standards Committee approved the proposal for a working party to be established to provide guidelines for the format of programme aims for use both on the website and as part of the HEAR. Once these were agreed and approved, the Quality Office will obtain the relevant programme outcomes for all programmes during semester two and input the information concerned in the relevant SITS fields.

Section 6 was still under discussion by the working group tasked by Academic Board and further meetings were held.

Further details and the recommendations of the working groups came to meetings of both the Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board.

Developments 2011

The information for programme aims has been received from all subject areas and is in the process of being added to the relevant fields following some programming by MIS to enable cut and paste from word to be undertaken. A standard format of summaries was agreed by the working party and guidelines provided to all academic colleagues to complete the summaries for their subjects/programmes.

The final stage of consultation is taking place with a deadline of 6th May for any changes to the summaries submitted.

A process for verifying the information required in section 6 has been agreed, including standard phrases to provide an explanation of the role undertaken by the student. The roles have been split into voluntary roles (with sub headings including Student Union roles, Mentoring, Guardian Angels) and paid roles (including student ambassadors, non- medical helpers).

Final agreement and consultation on the headings is currently taking place with the final guidelines to be ready in mid May. The draft versions of the HEAR have been shared with students, the Students Union, Academic Colleagues and employers and their views and comments sought.

Test runs of HEARs will be undertaken from mid-May onwards, with HEARS produced in July and a hard copy supplied, together with the degree certificate, at this year's graduation ceremonies in October.

With employers a further questionnaire was provided, (in line with the first consultation with employers undertaken in 2009), and the outcomes were very similar with employers feeling in particular that the details of the awards, including module details and programme aims were the most useful elements.

It is planned to provide a questionnaire to go to graduating students with their HEAR in July to seek their initial response and to follow up with a further questionnaire (to accompany the destination of leavers survey undertaken at the end of the year) to see what uses their HEARS have been put to.

With the introduction of SharePoint in the University College, it is planned in the first instance to use this facility to store completed HEARs with a password access for the graduate to use and supply to employers.

This is in the early stages and we await sector developments with JISC before confirming the details of how we would wish this to operate internally.

Appendix B: HEAR Section 4 Summary Guidelines

Common information in relation to work based learning, work placements, school experience, study abroad opportunities, electives and dissertation will be covered in the general information provided at the start of section 4.

By removing the above information from the subject specific summaries, more space is therefore available for academic colleagues as the space considerations mean that, in order to keep the section on one page, the following maximum word limits would need to be kept to:

Single Honours and ITE, PGCE, Foundation Degrees and Masters:	550 words
Major Routes for Combined Honours:	400 words
Joint Routes for Combined Honours:	275 words
Minor Routes for Combined Honours:	150 words

In order to provide some parity between summaries it is recommended that academic colleagues provide a short paragraph on each of the following:

- Structure;
- Content;
- Skills.

It is recommended that the inclusion of potential career routes as part of the information should be encouraged, but that the summaries should concentrate on the specific skills gained rather than limiting to specific job titles, except where professional accreditation is concerned.

A summary is required for each separate route you offer (e.g. Major, Minor, Single Honours, FD, Masters, ITE, PGCE and each different title for your subject)

May we also request that colleagues send their summaries as word documents as these can be easily converted for the relevant boxes on the SITS system.