

CASE STUDY TO SUPPORT HEAR IMPLEMENTATION

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)

UWIC became one of the initial trial institutions in 2008 and has continued as an active and committed member of both phases of the trial.

The institution intends to provide HEARs in paper form for all graduating students this year.

UWIC has also pioneered the publication of more detailed information on academic achievement at sub module level, including information about the nature of the assessment task(s). Example HEARs in this format can be viewed at: http://www3.uwic.ac.uk/English/registry/Pages/HEAR_examples.aspx

A. Institutional Background.

UWIC is a constituent institution of the Federal University of Wales and was granted degree-awarding powers in 1995.

With 10,000 students and an annual turnover of £70 million UWIC is considered a mid-sized UK university; granted the Government's Charter Mark for Excellence in 1995, 1998, 2001 and 2005 – the first UK university to achieve this. Key features of UWIC which contributed to the achievement of customer service excellence are standards which reflect national priorities and Welsh Assembly Government targets; high levels of customer satisfaction; excellent provision of information; involvement with and contribution to the wider community.

Five academic schools offer study areas including: art and design, business, IT and management, teacher training, biomedical and environmental sciences, sport, tourism, hospitality and food science.

UWIC currently boasts 14 Centres of Excellence, which offer applied research and consultancy to organisations within the UK and internationally. These include the National Centre for Product Design and Development Research, the Institute for Vocational Exercise and Sport Training and the Wales Applied Health Research Unit.

UWIC has been independently and consistently acclaimed as one of the leading 'new universities' in Wales, and amongst the top across the whole of the UK (The Times Good University Guide league table) and rated second most improved of all UK universities in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise.

B. Purposes in participating within the trial.

There were three key drivers in supporting the move to participate in original trial work:

- The strong level of commitment to providing students with information in respect of their progress and achievement, for which the HEAR initiative was seen as a logical next step.
- The interest within the institution in seeking to offer a 'competitive advantage' to students upon graduation.
- The involvement of the Vice-Chancellor on the Steering Group, which both emphasised institutional commitment and ensured a strong advocate within the institution.

In addition, while participation in a national initiative was noted, a key – and more compelling - element within this was to be one of the leading institutions within Wales.

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

The institution had issued Transcripts for a number of years, but the importance of providing such information for students had come into recent prominence with moves to provide such data for students three or four weeks ahead of the formal Awards ceremony. All data required for the production of such Transcripts was held centrally, together with approved explanatory text available via the web, which was an important advantage in the production process. In addition, information on assessment at sub-module level was also held centrally.

The institution does not issue the Diploma Supplement as a separate document, rather combining the existing Transcript with supporting explanatory text. It does not provide an extra-curricular award, though the HEAR may provide some of the impetus for this.

During the period covered by the Trial the institution has been in the process of moving to a new Student Records System, provided by Agresso. The timing of the trial has been helpful in this context, in that it has ensured that the requirements for HEAR could be fully considered in building the new implementation. The implementation of the new system has not slowed the implementation process however.

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 befits the size of the institution, the work has been undertaken by a small informal group, (the Dean of Learning and Teaching, the Head of IT, the Academic Registrar and the Students Union, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor), 'meeting together, to plan the phases, and the development'. While there is no representation from the Careers Service here, they are represented on Academic Board and on the Learning and Teaching Board (which takes a Quality Enhancement role). The latter, together with the Academic Quality and Standards Board, both report to Academic Board. Discussion of the HEAR has been prominent in all three contexts.

Beyond these contexts the key emphasis – on production of the HEAR – has placed most pressure on IT staff, not least because this implementation is associated both with the introduction of the new SRS and with the use of the current one. In addition the contribution from students has also been important and positive, including contributions made to national events.

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

Key tasks have been:

- Working with the original SRS to produce an original HEAR version automatically, so as to demonstrate the feasibility of the process;
- Moves to support the production of more detailed information on academic achievement at sub-module level, and re-formatting data so as to enable production using the new, incoming SRS;
- The adoption of a cautious, evolutionary approach to section 6, reflective both of the recognition that this is an institutional document (and hence entries must be subject to appropriate quality assurance processes) and the changeover of SRS. In the first instance use has been made of the Keele protocols as the basis for the development of UWIC precepts for local development and implementation, these being seen as much more helpful than starting afresh. There is still work to do here in respect of Student Representative roles;

- In respect of the element of section 6 dealing with Prizes awarded, information concerning these was previously held on distributed databases at local level, and the introduction of the HEAR has therefore provided a context for the collation of this information centrally.

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

In respect of student reactions, these have been highly positive, though no HEARs have been distributed so far. Positive reactions from student leaders have been particularly noted through the presentation at Academic Board of HEAR exemplars for discussion.

In relation to employers, work has not taken place with this group so far, though the institution is also aware of the key role played by Professional Bodies for many of its programmes.

Academic staff have been pleased by the initiative, given that most of the data is held centrally and the Deans represented on the relevant Boards have fed information on developments back into their schools. All Schools have reported positive reactions to the development, not least because of the sense that the development will offer UWIC students a competitive advantage in the local labour market.

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:

- The importance of a key decision taken early on, that there should be no ‘hand editing’ of any HEAR documentation;
- The clarification in respect of prizes, which has been helpful institutionally, and can additionally be published to web pages, thereby giving greater visibility. This raised visibility is also important in encouraging staff to provide such information;
- The adoption of the Keele protocols as a basis for development work, which both enabled the prioritisation of work based on a coherent set of principles and clarified the nature of the relationship, and difference, between the HEAR and any Personal Development Planning documentation¹. ‘*Getting the precepts right will help define the sort of document the HEAR is*’.
- Setting up the “HEAR homepage” provided a focus for the activity – and having the “short url” was also a good move. We would recommend this to other institutions. . ‘*Getting the precepts right will help define the sort of document the HEAR is*’.

H. Future Plans for HEAR development.

In terms of future developments:

- Further work will be undertaken to develop entries for section 6;
- Further consideration will need to be given as to the use that may be made of the HEAR on a formative basis, particularly when the Agresso system is fully operational;
- There is interest in Shared services for HEAR publication, perhaps via Digitary. UWIC is participating in a JISC-funded project in this area.

¹ The “UWIC version” of the Keele protocols is at: <http://www.uwic.ac.uk/HEAR>