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Introducing the **HEAR**



The final report of the Burgess
Implementation Steering Group



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to present the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) formally to the UK higher education sector and its representative bodies.

The HEAR is designed to encourage a more sophisticated approach to recording student achievement, one that acknowledges more fully the rich range of opportunities that higher education institutions in the UK offer to their students and better represents the full range of outcomes from the whole higher education student experience in the 21st century.

The HEAR will bring a wide range of benefits to students, employers and higher education institutions. In addition, the Burgess Implementation Steering Group considers that the HEAR is both a symbolic and practical expression of the UK's student-centred and quality-focused higher education culture. We therefore anticipate that the HEAR will swiftly become another key feature in differentiating and distinguishing the UK higher education system from others.

The initial intention of the Implementation Steering Group was that we would fulfil our remit, report, and then allow the sector to discuss and implement our proposals, if it agreed they were a good idea. However, this was overtaken by events. The trialling process has taken longer than originally anticipated – for which we make no apology – and has been both extensive and intensive. Given the magnitude and importance of the task, we have taken our role in ensuring that the trialling was both comprehensive and robust very seriously. During this elongated period, several of the trialling institutions began issuing HEARs to their students and, increasingly, others outside the trialling process expressed interest in beginning to develop their own HEARs. As a consequence, more than half the sector is now engaged in activities aimed at implementing the HEAR whilst many others are waiting to act, once official endorsement from the representative bodies has been received.

The HEAR is the culmination of a long, careful process that started in 2004. Taking the HEAR from its original idea to implementation has been a huge task for the Implementation Steering Group over the past four years. It has been a shared and inclusive task that has involved the institutions and key agencies that

make up the UK higher education landscape, and to which the Implementation Steering Group extends grateful thanks. This includes the trialling institutions themselves and the Centre for Recording Achievement which, with assistance from the Higher Education Academy and JISC, designed and led the operation of the trialling process. Our work also received support from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

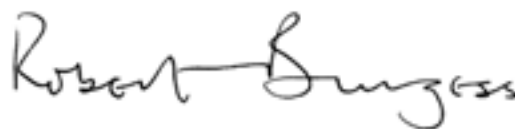
The HEAR is both a symbolic and practical expression of the UK's student-centred and quality-focused higher education culture.

Engaging students has been crucial to ensuring effective trialling and the work of the National Union of Students and students' unions has been essential to securing this. Employer bodies provided a wealth of useful advice and the support of the Association of Graduate Recruiters, in particular, has been invaluable in allowing us to use its good offices to make links, test ideas and draft guidance. The financial support from the four UK funding bodies – the Department for Employment and Learning of Northern Ireland, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Scottish Funding Council – has enabled us to conduct the necessary trialling, to our satisfaction, to put us in the position, ultimately, to recommend sector-wide adoption.

We must also acknowledge that, for decades, groups within the sector have been considering how best to measure and present student achievement and our work in developing the detail of the HEAR has been able to build on this resource as well as work that has been undertaken to produce the European Diploma Supplement.

I should personally like to thank the members and observers of the Implementation Steering Group, and its secretariat, for their support, thoughtful advice and significant contributions throughout the process. In particular, I would like to thank Jane Denholm who has worked on all the 'Burgess Groups' and drafted all the reports. She has done another excellent piece of work for which I am very grateful.

Clearly, the HEAR was developed in partnership and a sector-wide, united and shared approach to its implementation will be vital to its success. On behalf of the Implementation Steering Group I am therefore seeking the commendation of the representative bodies in order that the whole of the UK higher education sector can embark upon implementing the HEAR without delay.



Professor Sir Robert Burgess

Chair of the Implementation Steering Group and
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester
September 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Attaining a degree is a major educational milestone and the aim is that, from autumn 2012, all students entering undergraduate degree programmes of study in UK higher education institutions will leave with a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as well as a degree certificate.

Containing a rich range of information about the student's performance and achievements, the HEAR records their time in higher education much more broadly and fully than the traditional academic transcript, and at the same time captures relevant information of interest to employers. In time, the Burgess Implementation Steering Group hopes that the wider information contained in the HEAR will eclipse the degree classification and, where appropriate, serve as a replacement for it.

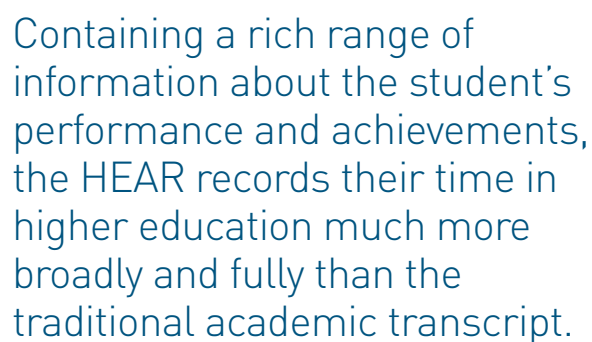
Introduction and background

The final report of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group ('the group') seeks official endorsement from Universities UK and GuildHE of the group's proposals regarding the HEAR, particularly its single recommendation:

The Burgess Implementation Steering Group recommends that the representative bodies commend the HEAR to be adopted sector-wide for students entering higher education in academic year 2012–13.

This work derived from the 2007 report *Beyond the honours degree classification*, which had considered replacing the honours degree classification but had failed to identify a suitable alternative, acknowledging that 'establishing a replacement system for the current honours degree classification is fraught with critical dangers that would need to be fully addressed before such a radical change was made' and that 'some parts of the sector remain largely unconvinced of the need for radical change'. Instead it proposed that a complementary initiative – the HEAR – should, in future, be the central vehicle for recording all undergraduate-level higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions. The group aimed to implement the recommendations contained in that report – ie to develop and trial the HEAR, to address the considerable practical issues pertaining to implementation and to devise guidance for key stakeholders.

The group's main workstream involved trialling the HEAR with a sample of 30 institutions representing a full spread of different types of higher education institution, drawn from all parts of the UK. An initial wave of 18 institutions in 2008 was widened out by an additional 12, in 2010, as trialling became both more intensive and extensive. Trialling provided an opportunity to see if the proposals were practical, workable and if they would add value. This activity was central to the group's work, exposing the problems and challenges to be solved, and raising issues to address.



Containing a rich range of information about the student's performance and achievements, the HEAR records their time in higher education much more broadly and fully than the traditional academic transcript.

When the group began its work in 2008, it was aiming towards implementation in 2010–11 and expected to report in advance of that on the outcomes of its activities with a recommendation for decision and action by the representative bodies regarding implementation. However, as the trialling got underway, it quickly became clear that a longer lead-in time would be necessary to ensure that trialling was comprehensive and that student record systems were capable of implementing the HEAR. At the same time, the level of interest and demand for further information from institutions outwith the trialling group grew rapidly. In November 2011, the group widened the pool beyond the official triallists, when Sir Robert wrote to each member of Universities UK and GuildHE, offering support to those interested. Such was the response – over 60 registrations of interest (in addition to the 30 triallists) by March 2012 – that the group realised it had reached a ‘tipping point’ in terms of engagement from the sector, with a critical mass beginning to use the materials to develop and implement the HEAR.

The group is now able to state with confidence that the HEAR is viable and will be of considerable value to the UK’s complex and diverse higher education sector. Quite properly, the decision to adopt a HEAR is up to individual, autonomous institutions. However, over half of the higher education institutions in the UK report that they are now going ahead with arrangements for its implementation. Others are awaiting official endorsement from the representative bodies. The group considers that a sector-wide, united and shared approach to the HEAR is vital to ensure maximum impact and, ultimately, its success.

Resources

Process – ensuring that the environment is suitably prepared for the HEAR – has been key to the work of the group, which has developed a suite of guidance documents, tools and other informative resources to address the range of issues involved, and aimed at all key stakeholder groups. Those comprising the essential, practical details for implementing the HEAR have been in circulation for some time and are being used now by institutions. **The main resources from the exercise are available on the new HEAR website, www.hear.ac.uk.**

What is the HEAR?

In essence, the HEAR is a concise, electronic document produced by a higher education institution which provides a record of a student’s achievement during their time in higher education. A maximum of six pages long (in hard copy terms), it must adhere to a standard template – to ensure consistency – and be verified by the academic registrar or equivalent officer in each institution to confirm credibility. It is updated at regular intervals and can be accessed by the student at any time during their career with the institution.

In summary, the HEAR:

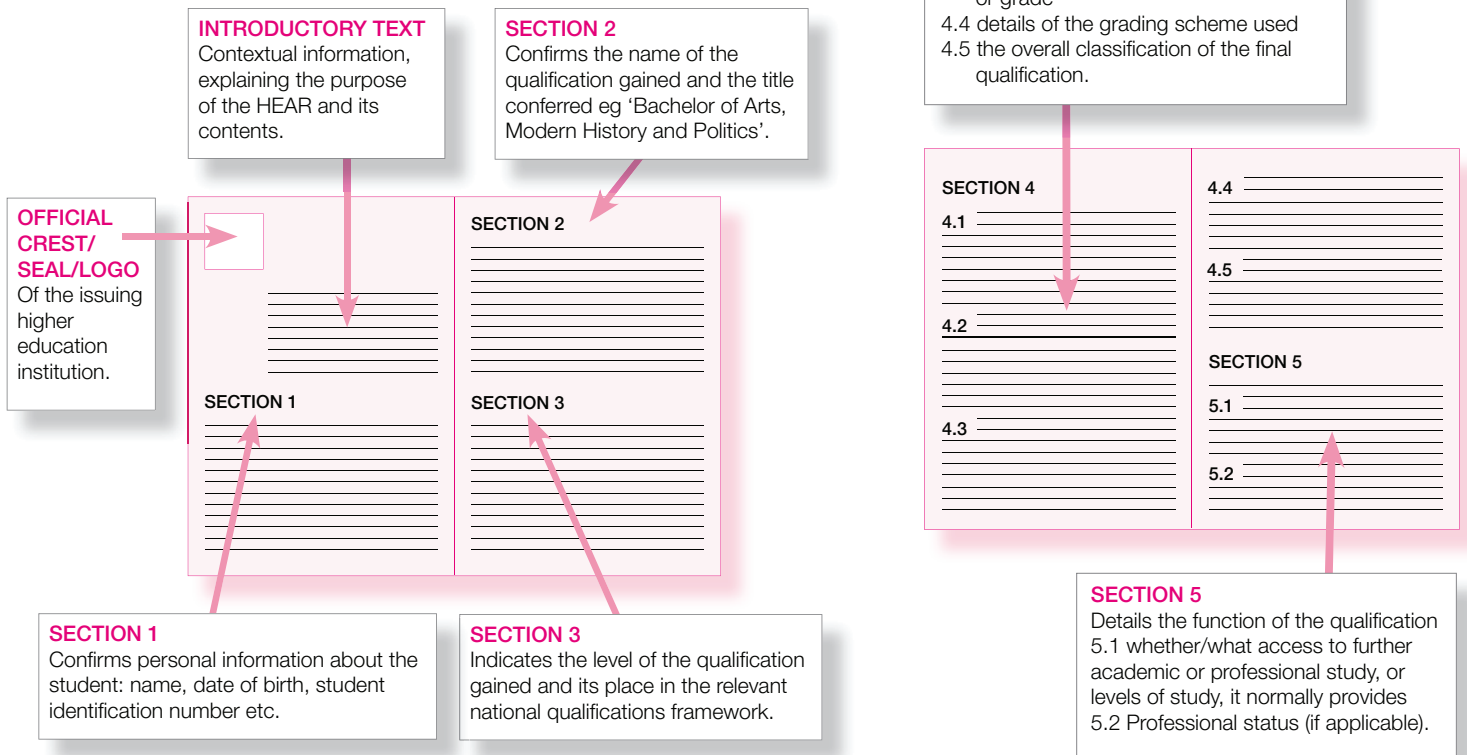
- is relevant to all UK higher education providers and their students
- captures a blend of knowledge and skills acquired through a wide range of higher education experiences
- measures and records achievement, providing students with a much broader picture than hitherto
- ensures that employers have better information about the distinguishing qualities of different graduates
- fits into, and promotes, a culture of lifelong learning by appearing to be less of an abrupt educational ‘end point’
- is practical to implement and useful to those institutions, students, graduates and employers that will be using it

In practical terms, the HEAR:

- is issued as an electronic document, a maximum of six pages long (in hard copy terms), which stands alone but with hypertext links to more detailed information, as appropriate
 - adheres to a standard template and contains a clear, consistent and specified core element
 - incorporates an enhanced academic transcript and conforms to the data fields for the European Diploma Supplement
 - contains information about academic credit which will link directly to the national credit framework for the part of the UK in which the award is made
-

- is authorised and stewarded by the awarding institution responsible for the information, and so contains only information about institutional learning opportunities and other achievements that have been verified and validated by the institution, or by an authorised, trusted third-party organisation
- contains an overall summative judgement – whether the honours degree classification, grade point average or any other – verified by the institution
- begins in the first year of study and is accessible by the student at any time during their career with the institution. It is updated and validated at regular intervals by the institution – at least annually – and, as such, has the capacity to be used as a formative tool
- becomes a fixed document at graduation, forming the permanent student record, held by the institution. It will be accessible for a period of at least 40 years – as long as the institution traditionally holds student records – and thereafter at the discretion of the institution

- applies, initially, to full-time undergraduate students (eg levels 4–6 in the England/Wales/Northern Ireland Framework for Higher Education Qualifications [FHEQ] and levels 7–10 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework [SCQF]) – although it is already being widened out to other modes and levels by some institutions. The intention is that other higher education qualifications, including taught postgraduate qualifications, should eventually attract a HEAR
- is being implemented now for all new undergraduate students in some institutions and, during academic year 2012–13, in the majority of institutions



Students are attracted by a record of achievement that is unique to them and a broader document than the traditional degree certificate.

Agency (QAA)'s *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* to underpin this work. The group believes that the HEAR will quickly become another key feature which will further differentiate and distinguish the UK higher education system from others.

Benefits to students

The HEAR is primarily for students. As a formative, evolving, accessible document it will help them understand and develop their knowledge and skills and enhance their employability, by including not only assessment marks, but a much wider range of achievements, in a verified document. The HEAR will also provide students with a tangible reminder of their achievements and skills acquired during their years in higher education. Students are attracted by a record of achievement that is unique to them and a broader document than the traditional degree certificate.

Benefits to employers

The group has been careful to acknowledge the diversity of employers of graduates and can say that most of the employers it has encountered during its work – from large graduate recruiters to small and medium-sized employers and from the public, private and third sectors – are also very positive about the proposals. They cite a wide range of reasons for this, including that the HEAR will facilitate greater depth and understanding by candidates and foster increased self awareness on the part of candidates as well as improved, more consistent, recruitment processes allowing for greater depth of questioning. The potential for efficiencies in verifying, electronically, the achievements of successful candidates is considerable and highly attractive to both employers and higher education institutions.

Benefits to higher education institutions

Clearly the HEAR has the potential to make a significant contribution to improving and increasing

the information provided to students and others. At the same time, it acknowledges more fully the rich range of opportunities that higher education institutions offer to their students, currently obscured by the focus on the summative degree classification. This, in turn, will help the sector to meet the current demands for increased information about the higher education experience and has the potential to lead to efficiencies. Institutions particularly welcome the potential for information contained in the HEAR to replace the need to confirm graduation, degree classification and academic references for employers.

Conclusions

The group has fulfilled its remit. The extensive and intensive nature of the trialling has provided it with confidence that it has captured, considered and resolved the main issues and challenges that institutions will encounter in introducing and implementing the HEAR. This has enabled it to devise appropriate processes and procedures for using the HEAR, as well as to prepare and publish practical, evidence-based guidance on all of the key aspects that will be of concern to institutions in taking the work forward. Although it represents a change, and possibly in some cases a challenge, to existing practice, the experience of the trialling institutions has convinced the group that the HEAR can be implemented across a diverse range of institutions. Moreover, as time goes on and the HEAR becomes embedded, the benefits will vastly outweigh the initial investment required.

The HEAR will prove a most effective use of institutional resources, focused on better meeting the information needs of students and employers, clearly and concisely. It will do justice to student achievements by making fuller use of institutional information about achievement, thus also acknowledging more fully the experience that UK higher education institutions offer students in the 21st century. Once it starts to be implemented systematically and fully across the sector more benefits may be realised as the potential for using the HEAR creatively unfolds. Expectations are already high and the group believes these will be both fulfilled and fuelled as graduates from participating institutions start to find their HEARs to be valuable in practice.

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1

This is the report of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group ('the group'). It is presented to Universities UK and GuildHE and seeks official endorsement of our proposal that the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – a means of enhancing and presenting student achievement through a common template – should be commended to the UK higher education sector for implementation during academic year 2012–13. It also constitutes the formal report on the work with which we were charged. (Membership and Terms of Reference are at Annexe A.)

1.2

This work derived from the 2007 report *Beyond the honours degree classification*², which proposed that a HEAR should, in future, be the central vehicle for recording all undergraduate-level higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions. It recommended 'a period of exploration, development and testing in stages, with a view to arriving at a new, complementary, approach' to the honours degree classification.³ We were charged with trialling the draft template for the HEAR, outlined in the 2007 report, with a view to developing it into an effective and useful tool that could be recommended to the sector as a whole for adoption. Details of the workplan presented to us in the report are at Annexe B.

1.3

When our group began its work in 2008, we were aiming towards implementation in 2010–11. We expected to report in advance of that on the outcomes of our activities with a recommendation for decision and action on the part of the representative bodies regarding implementation. However, as the trialling got underway, it quickly became clear that a longer lead-in time would be necessary to ensure that trialling was comprehensive and that student record systems were capable of implementing the HEAR.

We realised that our trialling work would need to be both more extensive and more intensive than first envisaged. Although this had implications for delivery, we have been clear that the timetable for endorsement and full roll-out of the HEAR should be driven by our confidence in being able to assure the representative bodies that we have developed and tested robust, scalable processes and have identified and fully resolved the challenges and potential obstacles to success. This, we have now achieved. The HEAR is viable and will be of considerable value to our complex and diverse higher education sector.

1.4

In addition, as the timescales for trialling lengthened, and the trialling itself deepened, the trialling institutions began to invest more in the process. Several committed to the concept of the HEAR and decided to start to produce HEARs for their students. At the same time, the level of interest and demand for further information from institutions outwith the trialling group grew rapidly. In November 2011, we capitalised on this highly positive development by markedly widening the pool of institutions involved, beyond the official triallists. Sir Robert Burgess, Chair of the Implementation Steering Group, wrote to the heads of all members of Universities UK and GuildHE offering support to those interested and we prepared and issued a 'Starter Pack' to those institutions wanting to take these developments forward immediately.^{4,5} Such was the response – over 60 registrations of interest (in addition to the 30 triallists) by March 2012 – that we realised we had reached a 'tipping point' in terms of engagement from the sector, with a critical mass beginning to use our materials to develop and implement the HEAR.

It quickly became clear that a longer lead-in time would be necessary to ensure that trialling was comprehensive and that student record systems were capable of implementing the HEAR.

² UUK (2007) *Beyond the honours degree classification* London: UUK

³ UUK 2007 p. 34

⁴ Letter from chair of Implementation Steering Group to UK VCs, November 2011

⁵ Sir Robert has since also written to the Mixed Economy Group of English further education colleges, offering support, with encouraging results. A commensurate invitation will be extended to colleges in other parts of the UK and subsequent work will be taken forward to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for higher education students in this sector, particularly for students articulating from higher education programmes in further education colleges into higher education institutions.

1.5

Thus, a significant number of higher education institutions – more than half the sector – are now going ahead with arrangements for implementing the HEAR. Others are awaiting official endorsement from the representative bodies. A sector-wide, united and shared approach to the HEAR is vital to its success and to ensure maximum impact. We acknowledge that, quite properly, the decision to adopt a HEAR is up to autonomous, individual institutions. However, with confidence in the processes, and in the knowledge that the majority of the sector is now moving ahead with preparing for its introduction, the group recommends that the representative bodies commend the HEAR to be adopted sector-wide for students entering higher education in academic year 2012–13.

1.6

This part of the report explains the context to the introduction of the HEAR and outlines the group's methodology. The background to the introduction of the HEAR is at Annexe C. A fuller description of the HEAR is given in part 2 of the report and the benefits we believe it will bring are discussed in part 3, with conclusions and recommendations summarised in part 4. Details of our extensive methodology and the issues and challenges we have discussed and resolved are at Annexes D and E, respectively. Part 5 suggests next steps for implementation and maintenance.

Our proposals supplement substantially the existing honours degree classification with richer and fuller information.

Context

The UK honours degree

1.7

The UK honours degree is a robust and highly-valued qualification. It is the core product of the UK higher education system. The honours degree classification system is the means whereby a student's performance on an undergraduate honours degree programme is currently represented. Honours degree graduates will have acquired understanding of a complex body of knowledge, a wide range of high-level skills and a broad level of experience. A single summative judgement from a small classification scale cannot – and does not – do justice to this. Nor does it capture the wider experiences and other opportunities for learning, development and achievement that higher education institutions offer to students in the 21st century. For as long as it endures, the honours degree classification will still appear clearly in the HEAR (at Section 4.5) but the HEAR will enhance the means by which student achievement is identified, measured and recorded. Our proposals supplement substantially the existing honours degree classification (or any other form of summative judgement or other awards in higher education) with richer and fuller information.

1.8

The case for changing the honours degree classification system was clearly made by the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group in *Beyond the honours degree classification*⁶ and is detailed at Annexe C. In summary, that group concluded that the system which gave rise to the honours degree classification mechanism had been transformed out of all recognition, and that there was a need to do justice to the full range of student experience by enabling a wider recognition of student achievement than could be reflected in a single summative judgement. Further, the steering group considered that the current system is 'at odds with lifelong learning. It encourages students and employers to focus on one final outcome and perceived "end point", rather than opening them to the concept of a range of different types and levels of achievement, which are each part of an ongoing process of learning that will continue beyond the attainment of their degree'.⁷ The group had considered replacing the honours degree classification but had failed to identify a suitable alternative, acknowledging that 'establishing a replacement system for the current honours degree classification is fraught with critical dangers that would need to be fully addressed before such a radical change was made' and that 'some parts of the sector

⁶ UUK 2007

⁷ UUK 2007 p.7

⁸ UUK 2007 p. 33

⁹ UUK 2007 p. 43

¹⁰ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) *Students at the Heart of the System* London: BIS

¹¹ BIS 2011 p. 44

remain largely unconvinced of the need for radical change'.⁸ Instead it proposed that a complementary initiative – the HEAR – should, in future, be the central vehicle for recording all undergraduate-level higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions. The steering group pragmatically acknowledged that, although it intended that 'the existing degree classification system will decline in importance until it should no longer be considered necessary... we cannot and do not assume this will be easily achieved'.⁹

1.9

The Implementation Steering Group, therefore, was charged with implementing the recommendations contained in *Beyond the honours degree classification* – ie to develop and trial the HEAR, to address the considerable practical issues pertaining to implementation and to devise guidance for key stakeholders.

Context for developing the HEAR

1.10

Whilst the original analysis stands, in 2012 there are additional imperatives for change, not least the fact that, in all parts of the UK, students are increasingly contributing to the costs of their education, albeit to varying degrees. Graduate employability has always been an implicit outcome from higher education but this has become increasingly explicit in recent years with, for example, more and more institutions developing extracurricular skills awards. Primarily focused on employability, many of these awards are also intended to recognise and value achievement through the range of activities that students undertake whilst within higher education. The importance of this sort of activity has been highlighted further by the economic difficulties that the UK is currently enduring. In addition, the HEAR captures more explicitly the full extent of the higher education experience, including learning and achievement that takes place beyond the formal curriculum, with the focus being on the benefits to students.

1.11

During the development phase the HEAR has attracted significant political support. In England, the outcomes from the Browne Review of tuition fees and the subsequent White Paper *Students at the Heart of the System*¹⁰ have led institutions to consider more explicitly what they are offering to students and this includes being clearer about their achievements and the

benefits they have gained from their higher education experience. The White Paper envisaged the HEAR playing an important role in this when it stated, 'we expect to see most institutions developing HEARs for all their undergraduate students from September 2012'.¹¹

1.12

In *Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland*, the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland said that it 'expects institutions to accredit and recognise the skills and experiences, academic and otherwise, that learners develop throughout their higher education careers through an achievement record. The Department will, therefore, in co-operation with the sector, support the introduction of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)¹², adding that its aim is that 'by 2018, all learners will have a HEAR'.¹³

1.13

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's *Strategic approach to the student experience 2010–11 to 2012–13* urges institutions to 'promote the production of the... [European Diploma Supplement]... by Welsh institutions, either separately or through the use of the HEAR'.¹⁴

1.14

Although not explicit in Scotland, the intentions conveyed by *Putting Learners at the Centre*¹⁵, together with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in schools, will bring pressures commensurate with those being felt in the rest of the UK and to which, we believe, the HEAR will help institutions respond.

1.15

In addition, the Key Information Set, being adopted in all parts of the UK, is encouraging higher education institutions to improve the information they offer prospective students, thus further strengthening the case for providing students with a fuller picture of their achievements at all stages of the learner journey. Published in March 2012, the *Review of Business-University Collaboration* by Professor Sir Tim Wilson specifically commended the benefits the HEAR will bring from an employer perspective. Part C of the QAA's new *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*¹⁶ sets out the expectations all providers of UK higher education are required to meet regarding information about higher education provision. Indicator 6 of the revised Part C is directly relevant to the HEAR, stating that 'when students leave their programme of study, higher education providers issue to them a detailed record

¹² DELNI (2012) *Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland* Belfast: DELNI p. 32

¹³ DELNI 2012 p. 65

¹⁴ HEFCW (2010) *HEFCW's strategic approach to the student experience 2010–11 to 2012–13* Cardiff: HEFCW paragraph 41

¹⁵ Scottish Government (2011) *Putting Learners at the Centre* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

¹⁶ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2012) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* Gloucester: QAA

of their studies, which gives evidence to others of the student's achievement in their academic programme'. Furthermore, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a judgement on information will feature as part of the arrangements for institutional review of higher education institutions or of higher education offered in further education colleges from September 2012 onwards.¹⁷

1.16

Finally, but not least, our work itself has created expectations among key stakeholders – institutional staff, students and employers – and we discern from many quarters an eagerness for change which, we believe, is long overdue.

Methodology

1.17

In summary, the group aimed to implement the recommendations contained in the report *Beyond the honours degree classification*, namely to develop and trial the proposed HEAR, to address the considerable practical issues pertaining to implementation and to devise guidance for key stakeholders. The group comprised members drawn from higher education, including students, employers and other interested organisations and bodies across the UK. It met 14 times between February 2008 and April 2012. Membership and Terms of Reference are at Annexe A and fuller details of our methodology are at Annexe D.

Approach

1.18

Related to this, members agreed early on that, although the HEAR would be a product of its work, the process whereby it was generated was an important opportunity to engage the sector and other stakeholders. Whilst working in depth with a number of trialling institutions, we perceived a need for considerable awareness-raising and consensus-building, both within the sector and beyond it. We have taken particular care to ensure that the complexity and diversity of our UK higher education sector was captured and addressed in our work. A rolling programme of meetings, consultation events, exercises and conferences have been held at appropriate stages in the development of the HEAR, to expose the emerging proposals to the sector and other stakeholders and to gather their feedback. This will be continued in the implementation and maintenance phase.

1.19

As the 2007 report proposed, the agencies with the expertise and which were best placed to lead on the different work-streams were invited to do so. This had the additional benefit of enabling them to integrate HEAR-related activity with ongoing projects as appropriate and this will continue into the implementation and maintenance phases, managed by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Our priority lay in developing and testing the HEAR. The group – acting as an overarching monitoring body – spent a considerable proportion of its meetings receiving updates from the trialling institutions and considering and resolving the range of issues that came to light.

Trialling

1.20

The main work-stream was led by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) with the HEA and JISC, and involved trialling the HEAR with a sample of 30 institutions representing as far as possible a full spread of different types of higher education institution, drawn from all parts of the UK. An initial wave of 18 institutions was recruited in 2008. We were minded to ensure, particularly in this first wave of triallists, that the group was representative and not solely comprised of enthusiasts and early-adopters. This group was expanded by an additional 12, in 2010, as trialling became both more intensive and extensive. Trialling provided an opportunity to see if the proposals were practical and workable and if they would add value. The trialling and testing process was carried out in stages, intensively over the four years. During this period, seven of the trialling institutions began issuing HEARs as a matter of course to students. This trialling activity was central to our work, exposing problems and challenges to be solved, and raising issues to address. Further details are given at Annexes D and E.

¹⁷ QAA (2012) Part C UK Quality Code, Information about higher education provision, QAA, March 2012 and revised handbook for institutional review in England and Northern Ireland, QAA March 2012

Overarching principles

1.21

The group endorsed and adapted a set of overarching principles from the two previous Burgess exercises. The principles of most relevance to this stage of the process – that of developing and implementing the HEAR – are:

- ensuring that the interests of students are the primary concern of all aspects of the group's work
- respecting institutional autonomy and academic professionalism
- ensuring that proposals are, as far as possible, 'owned' by the sector via effective communication and consultation
- being concerned at all times about the possible burden of recommendations on institutions and staff
- going with the grain of existing developments, where possible
- being seen to be useful by the sector and containing practical examples to show that the HEAR is workable

1.22

As with the preceding exercises, the group resolved not to shy away from suggesting radical change and to propose change which had general support, even if a significant minority of institutions were opposed to it. We have sought at all times to ensure clarity about the opportunities we are trying to exploit or create as well as the challenges we have been addressing. In so doing we have ensured that our proposals are, as far as possible, evidence-based through extensive, formative trialling and testing.

Resources

1.23

Process – ensuring that the environment is suitably prepared for the HEAR – has been key to our work. We have developed a suite of guidance documents, tools and other informative resources to address the range of issues involved and aimed at all key stakeholder groups. Those comprising the essential, practical details for implementing the HEAR have been in circulation for some time and are being used now by institutions.

1.24

The main resources from the development work are available on the HEAR website, www.hear.ac.uk.

These include:

- An integrated '**Starter Pack**' for higher education institutions to allow them to move forward toward implementation:
 - **Guidance to inform institutional implementation** – a comprehensive guide for higher education institutions on implementing the HEAR
 - the HEAR template
 - a checklist for academic registrars
 - scenarios for costing the implementation of the HEAR
- **Exemplar HEARs**, using the HEAR template but detailing a range of different types of student journeys
- **Case studies** from those trialling full implementation of the HEAR
- The **HEAR Self-assessment Framework**, to assess institutional readiness
- Technical documentation including:
 - the **technical specification**, for use with software vendors including an **XML schema**
 - the technical architecture considerations
 - the **HEAR Mapping Document** including a quick reference spreadsheet
 - a briefing on **standards**
- **A Guide for Students** on how to use the HEAR produced by the National Union of Students (NUS) in hard copy and also a web-based, downloadable version that students' unions can use and customize as they see fit
- **The Employers' Guide to the HEAR** – a series of three documents – Detailed Guide, Quick Guide and Guide to Using – for employers on making use of the HEAR, available online and as downloadable PDFs
- Employer and institutional **JISCMail groups**
- This **final report** which reports on the development of the HEAR and seeks endorsement of sector-wide implementation from 2012–13

PART 2

THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

Aim

2.1

Attaining a degree is a major educational milestone and our aim is that, from autumn 2012, all undergraduate students entering programmes of study in UK higher education institutions will leave with a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), as well as a degree certificate. Containing a rich range of information about the student's performance and achievements, the HEAR records their time in higher education much more broadly and fully than the traditional academic transcript, and at the same time captures relevant information of interest to employers. In time, we hope the wider information contained in the HEAR will eclipse the degree classification and, where appropriate, serve as a replacement for it.

In time, we hope the wider information contained in the HEAR will eclipse the degree classification and, where appropriate, serve as a replacement for it.

What is the HEAR?

2.2

In essence, the HEAR is a concise, electronic document produced by a higher education institution which provides a record of student achievement during their time studying for a degree in higher education. A maximum of six pages long (in hard copy terms)¹⁸, it must adhere to a national template – to ensure consistency – and be verified by the academic registrar or equivalent officer in each institution to confirm credibility. It is updated at regular intervals and can be accessed by the student at any time during their career with the institution. It can be accessed by or transmitted to potential employers if the student so wishes.

In summary, the HEAR:

- is relevant to all UK higher education providers and their students
- captures a blend of knowledge and skills acquired through a wide range of higher education experiences
- measures and records achievement, providing students with a much broader picture than hitherto
- ensures that employers have better information about the distinguishing qualities of different graduates
- fits into, and promotes, a culture of lifelong learning by appearing to be less of an abrupt educational 'end point'
- is practical to implement and useful to those institutions, students, graduates and employers that will be using it

¹⁸ Institutions in Wales adopting the HEAR will need to do so in the context of their Welsh Language Scheme, which may require them to produce a Welsh language HEAR or a bilingual HEAR (bilingual would be longer than six pages).

In practical terms, the HEAR:

- is issued as an electronic document, a maximum of six pages long (in hard copy terms), which stands alone but with hypertext links to more detailed information, as appropriate
 - adheres to a standard template and contains a clear, consistent and specified core element
 - incorporates an enhanced academic transcript and conforms to the data fields for the European Diploma Supplement
 - contains information about academic credit which will link directly to the national credit framework for the part of the UK in which the award is made
 - is authorised and stewarded by the awarding institution responsible for this information, and so contains only information about institutional learning opportunities and other achievements that have been verified and validated by the institution, or by an authorised, trusted third-party organisation
 - continues to contain an overall summative judgement – whether the honours degree classification, grade point average or any other – verified by the institution
 - begins in the first year of study and is accessible by the student at any time during their career with the institution. It is updated and validated at regular intervals by the institution – we suggest at least annually – and, as such, has the capacity to be used as a formative tool
 - becomes a fixed document at graduation, forming the permanent student record, held by the institution. It will be accessible for a period of at least 40 years – as long as the institution traditionally holds student records – and thereafter at the discretion of the institution
 - applies, initially, to full-time undergraduate students (eg levels 4–6 in the England/Wales/Northern Ireland Framework for Higher Education Qualifications [FHEQ] and levels 7–10 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework [SCQF]) – although it is already being widened out to other modes and levels by some institutions.¹⁹ Our intention is that other higher education qualifications, including taught postgraduate qualifications, should eventually attract a HEAR
 - is being implemented now for all new undergraduate students in some institutions and, during academic year 2012–13, in the majority of institutions
-

What does the HEAR cover?

2.3

The *Guidance to inform institutional implementation* is the detailed guide for higher education institutions which are implementing the HEAR. In summary, the HEAR comprises eight main sections, following the European Diploma Supplement format and numbering, as well as contextual information and institutions are encouraged to make links to more detailed information as appropriate. The data fields, content and protocols for completion are defined and specified in the guidance for institutions. This is essential for national and international recognition as a report incorporating a European Diploma Supplement document, which we anticipate the HEAR will achieve.

2.4

An exemplar HEAR is shown at Annexe F. A diagram giving an overview of the HEAR is in the Executive summary on page 6.

Explanation of key sections

2.5

The sections of the HEAR that have involved the most discussion and trialling have been concerned with:

- the amount of information available about assessment (Section 4.3)
 - the other activities and skills that can be verified by the institution, outside the formal degree programme (Section 6.1)
-

2.6

These sections require further, more detailed, explanation as they are key to realising the potential of the HEAR. During our consultations, as the HEAR was trialled in various forms, these sections became increasingly widely known by number. As they will not be renumbered (they are consistent with the European Diploma Supplement specification), we find this useful shorthand, at least for communicating with the sector.

¹⁹ For example, in cases where programmes involve full-time and part-time students studying concurrently

Programme details: Section 4.3

2.7

For the HEAR to be successful, it must provide a much deeper record of student achievement than the standard academic transcript that is currently made available by many higher education institutions. The HEAR, therefore, provides details about the student's course, alongside the marks they gained in individual modules. Section 4, where this information is captured, is likely to be the largest of the eight sections and Section 4.3 will be among the most complex.

2.8

Section 4.3 will provide details of all the components that have contributed to the final summary mark or grade. It will incorporate concise tables of programme details, providing the particulars of each of the individual elements or parts of the qualification – eg modules or units studied – and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained. It will also identify – subject to institutional decision and as far as systems allow – the form of assessment – eg timed examination, essay, project, dissertation, etc – and the relative weighting of each component towards the final summary mark or grade. It will cover all examinations and assessed components including resits or fails that count towards, or are prerequisites for, the final degree.

2.9

It will also include information on the credit allocation between course components and units where available, and link these to national credit frameworks and equivalent European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit values. This section is also where institutions will record details of any credits for prior learning, as well as the name of the institution which awarded them, if appropriate.

Additional information: Section 6.1

2.10

The group considers Section 6.1 to be one of the major components at the heart of the HEAR. It enables institutions to add additional information in order to create a HEAR which provides a rich picture of each individual student's achievement, related to wider academic and non-academic contexts. This section provides a record of a broad range of extracurricular activities and achievements – for example, prizes awarded, employability skills awards that attract additional credit not registered at Section 4 or otherwise assessed, and positions held, such as course

representative or students' union officer. It is key to the credibility of the HEAR that such information can be verified by the institution.

2.11

Additional information will be recorded under one of three category headings:

-
- **Additional awards** – accredited performance in non-academic contexts measured or assessed by, or with external accreditation recognised by, the university. This category also provides the opportunity for the inclusion of individual units or modules studied in addition to the main degree programme, if these do not already appear in Section 4.3 – for example credit-bearing volunteering
-
- **Additional recognised activities** – roles and activities undertaken by students which demonstrate achievement but for which no recognition is provided in terms of academic credit – for example volunteering, students' union representative roles, representation at national level in sport or training courses run internally, which do not attract credit
-
- **University, professional and departmental prizes** – rewarding both academic and non-academic achievement
-

2.12

We are confident that the categories proposed are comprehensive. To assist with completing this section, a series of propositions have been developed within trialling institutions and refined by the group to support the implementation of good practice. These are outlined in detail in the guidance for institutions and include, for example, the suggestion that a set of protocols, or criteria, for selection of content for Section 6.1 is agreed in advance and published across the institution. In addition we also propose that each institution should reach an agreement with its students' union (or other comparable representative body) on the inclusion in Section 6.1 of activities in which the students' union has a role in delivery and/or verification.

2.13

Details of the discussions the group has had about the key sections, and other issues, are at Annexe E.

PART 3

BENEFITS OF THE HEAR

3.1

The HEAR has been designed to encourage a sophisticated approach to recording achievement that better represents the full range of outcomes from learning and the student experience in higher education at the same time as encouraging personal development that is commensurate with a lifelong learning culture.

3.2

The changes this will require are not without their challenges and, in four years of trialling, we have encountered and considered a wide range of issues. These have included academic and content-related matters – such as what exactly should be recorded; administrative challenges – such as who ‘owns’ the information contained in the HEAR; and technical challenges – such as those relating to security and access. We have fully addressed these issues and, as they have impacted on decisions we have taken regarding the shape, structure and content of the HEAR, they are discussed more fully in Annexe E.

3.3

The many benefits the HEAR will bring to the key stakeholder groups – students, employers and higher education institutions themselves – are discussed below. In addition, the HEAR is both a symbolic and practical expression of UK higher education culture. Higher education institutions in the UK are well known for both their student-centred nature and their commitment to sound and well-established quality assurance practices, which are based on learning from experience and research and on continuously improving what they do. Institutions also engage collectively in a range of activities designed to secure and enhance the reputation of the sector as a whole using, in particular, a common set of tools, detailed in the QAA’s *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, to underpin this work. We believe that the HEAR will quickly become another key feature which will further differentiate and distinguish the UK higher education system from others.

Benefits to students

3.4

The HEAR is primarily for students. As a formative, evolving, accessible document it will help them understand and develop their knowledge and skills and enhance their employability, by including not only assessment marks, but a much wider range of achievements, in a verified document. The HEAR will also provide students with a tangible reminder of their achievements and skills acquired during their years in higher education. Students are attracted by a record of achievement that is a broader document than the current degree certificate. In addition, students like the idea that, whereas many students receive an identical degree certificate, no two HEARs are likely to be the same. The HEAR is about the individual student and will provide a record of the student’s own, unique, experience of higher education.

It will help students understand and develop their knowledge and skills, enhancing their employability.

Formative

3.5

As well as being a formal exit document, issued at the point of graduation, the HEAR is also, crucially, a formative document. Students will be aware of their HEAR when they begin their studies and they can start using it to keep track of their achievements as they progress through their academic career. Some institutions have already indicated that they plan to use the HEAR as a focus for formal, one-to-one discussions with their students about their ongoing development. The HEAR will encourage students to spend time reflecting on their achievements and what they have learned from them. It will also encourage them to be proactive and plan their own learning and to identify and act on any perceived skills or knowledge gaps. In so doing, it has the potential to encourage students to make the best use of their time in higher education.

Reference point

3.6

The HEAR should better enable students to identify and communicate their skills and experiences to employers and indications are that both students and employers consider that it will have value as an aide-memoire and reference point for students. Students will be more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and this knowledge will support more thoughtful, effective and targeted applications. One employer told us: 'this will be fantastic for the students'. Early indications from the very small sample of students who have been issued with HEARs are that they found/are finding the HEAR useful in seeking employment and we suggest fuller monitoring is carried out as the HEAR comes on stream and more students start to make use of it.

Convenience

3.7

The relevant HEAR information can, potentially, be uploaded directly into online recruitment systems, both saving time that would be spent rekeying module marks and avoiding error. The growing pervasiveness of such systems suggests this feature will be welcomed increasingly by students and employers. In addition, because the information will be available electronically, on a rolling basis, students will be able to allow potential employers access to their HEAR information before graduation, when applying for an internship or a placement for example, or for a job or course in their final year. Once they have completed their studies, they will have a complete record, in a single electronic document, of everything they have achieved whilst studying which, again, will be available to share with potential employers or postgraduate tutors.

Employers particularly welcome the inclusion of non-academic achievements and the extra granularity of grade information that the HEAR will be able to provide.

Breadth

3.8

Beyond the honours degree classification described the current 'obsession' with the need to achieve a first- or upper second-class degree as 'unhealthy and damaging'²⁰. The HEAR acknowledges the wider picture of a student's achievements thus both contextualising and taking some of the focus off the degree classification or other summative judgement.

Benefits to employers

3.9

We have been careful to acknowledge the diversity of employers of graduates and can say that most of the employers we have encountered during our work – from large graduate recruiters to small and medium-sized employers and from the public, private and third sectors – are also very positive about the proposals. They cite a wide range of reasons, including that the HEAR will facilitate greater depth and understanding by candidates and foster increased self awareness on the part of candidates as well as improved consistency and efficiency in recruitment processes. The Wilson report has also urged employers to start using the HEAR 'at the earliest opportunity'.²¹

Depth

3.10

Employers particularly welcome the inclusion of non-academic achievements and the extra granularity of grade information that the HEAR will be able to provide. Of particular value – especially to those who are recruiting from a very wide degree pool – are aspects such as references to cognitive and key skills, which some employers will use to frame interview questions. Most interview questions in such contexts are necessarily standard but the HEAR will allow these to be contextualised and customised in the light of a more rounded and detailed picture of the achievements of the applicant. It will make interviews more personal and allow candidates to talk about their real experiences. SMEs (themselves highly diverse – from micro-businesses to very substantial employers) and third sector employers will find the HEAR useful as it gives them access to a level of information that they do not have the selection tools to access themselves, unlike the big graduate recruiters. Many third sector employers, on principle, do not seek to screen out applicants without a degree. They welcome the focus on verified achievements, skills and attributes that the HEAR provides.

²⁰ UUK 2007 p. 25

²¹ Wilson 2012 Recommendation 25

The HEAR will encourage students to spend time reflecting on their achievements and what they have learned from them. It has the potential to encourage students to make the best use of their time in higher education.

3.11

Employers are aware that many higher education institutions now offer their own employability skills awards although they also report some uncertainty about what exactly these contain. The HEAR will be helpful as it will provide more information on the content and format of such awards. Information in respect of additional roles will also be very helpful because it is all in one place and verified. Many SMEs, in particular, require individuals capable of carrying out a range of tasks using a variety of skills and, by demonstrating breadth of engagement, the HEAR will provide a sense of this as well as a hook for further interview questions.

3.12

Many employers remain attached to an overall summative judgement and the honours degree classification (or other summative judgement) is clearly visible at Section 4.5 of the HEAR.

Self-awareness

3.13

Employers also expect to reap tangible, if indirect, benefits through students being better able to express their achievements in applications. The Wilson report corroborates this: 'the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is recommended for recording each student's development, activities and achievements for the purposes of self awareness and future employment'.²²

Consistency

3.14

For large graduate recruiters, highly selective and rigorous processes 'have the potential to deliver outcomes that may be inconsistent with company diversity policies'.²³ Wilson considers that 'a review of the parameters used within the pre interview filters, together with consideration of the use of the HEAR in the selection process, should provide the recruiter with improved reliability and therefore a lower risk of inappropriate appointments'.²⁴ The HEAR will enable employers to distinguish between graduates in other ways than simply by degree class and also to differentiate between those who are all holding a particular class of degree, in a clear and standardised way.

Efficiency

3.15

The Wilson review considers that the 'potential impact of HEAR upon the efficiency and effectiveness of graduate recruitment is significant'.²⁵ Our discussions with employers suggest that the uploading of HEAR academic information into an online system will be both time saving for applicants and more trusted by recruiters because, employers told us, 'the information is non-debatable'. This is particularly salient in respect of the verification of the achievements of successful candidates. Having such information securely available online, employers told us, would 'enable us to check you are the person you say you are' and 'make the process [of verification] much less messy'.

3.16

The evolving and formative nature of the student's HEAR, and the fact that employers will have access to the information (with the student's permission) prior to graduation, is welcomed. This will be especially useful in recruiting for internships as well as permanent employment in advance of final results.

²² Wilson 2012 Executive Summary paragraph 6

²³ Wilson 2012 Executive Summary paragraph 13

²⁴ Wilson 2012 Executive Summary paragraph 13

²⁵ Wilson 2012 paragraph 6.4.1

Employee development

3.17

One employer predicted that the HEAR could engender 'a mood change' in that the existence of the HEAR has the potential to change student behaviour by enhancing their aspirations from the earliest stages of their academic career, increasing their repertoire of capabilities and predisposing them to continuing professional development when they enter the world of work. In addition, some employers consider that the broad programme information at Section 4.3 has the further potential to be useful to future employees in supporting employee development, offering a more holistic perspective on development than an approach which is referenced to the job role alone.

Our aim is that, by demonstrating the wide range of their students' achievements, institutions can more fully do justice to those achievements than before and, thereby, also to themselves.

Benefits to higher education institutions

3.18

Clearly the HEAR has the potential to make a significant contribution to improving and increasing the information provided to students and others. At the same time, it acknowledges more fully the rich range of opportunities that higher education institutions offer to their students, currently obscured by the focus on the summative degree classification. This, in turn, will help the sector to meet the current demands for increased information about the higher education experience. The process of so doing will have additional intrinsic benefits and the potential to lead to efficiencies.

Sector aims and unique institutional offer

3.19

The HEAR complements current developments in UK higher education and, as described earlier, builds on the existing culture of quality enhancement and student-centred approaches. As such it is entirely congruent with current institutional aims, not least graduate employability and the consideration of more holistic approaches to graduate achievement reflected in work to define graduate attributes. The HEAR has the potential to bring together a wide range of institutional initiatives in this sphere.

3.20

The HEAR makes full use of what has hitherto been underutilised, and often unseen, information, considered subordinate to the degree classification. Sections 4.3 and 6.1 of the HEAR are dedicated to rounding out the picture of the student. Through incorporating wider information which has, in the past, been hidden, the HEAR enables the institution to capture and record more fully the unique blend of learning and experiences it offers to its students. Our aim is that, by demonstrating the wide range of their students' achievements, institutions can more fully do justice to those achievements than before and, thereby, also to themselves.

Selection of postgraduate candidates

3.21

Many institutions are likely to find the additional information contained in the HEAR – particularly that at Section 4.3 – invaluable in helping them select postgraduate students.

Better assessment information

3.22

The HEAR has the potential to address widespread frustrations in the sector about the degree classification system, well rehearsed in *Beyond the degree classification system*,²⁶ and could potentially, in time, serve as a replacement for it. Institutions involved in developing the HEAR report that it has led them to critically assess their internal processes for recording assessment, largely to positive ends.

²⁶ UUK 2007

Administrative effectiveness

3.23

The HEAR will become the institutional student record, collecting and storing student data coherently in one place. Evidence from the trialling suggests that it is likely that, in the course of implementation, student records systems and administrative activity will be re-evaluated by institutions and gaps and weaknesses will be identified, ultimately improving effectiveness. Other policies and procedures – for example, the awarding of prizes – will be clarified and, if necessary, improved as a result of discussions around Section 6.1. The HEAR potentially brings together a wide range of types of staff from registry, IT services, those working in teaching and learning and in careers and employability contexts. In addition, our evidence suggests that, through discussions about the HEAR and joint identification by institutions and students' unions of verifiable activities, relationships will be developed and improved.

Efficiency

3.24

Once the HEAR is in place, feedback from employers suggests that it could negate their need to seek confirmation of graduation, degree classification and even academic references from tutors, a change that institutions would warmly welcome.

Clearly the HEAR has the potential to make a significant contribution to improving and increasing the information provided to students and others.

Compliance

3.25

The HEAR fits with existing and new developments in higher education such as the European Diploma Supplement (DS) and with other moves towards providing fuller information including the requirement for Key Information Sets for prospective higher education students. The HEAR carries this on by providing students with better and richer information in a manner which is also compliant with the new QAA *UK Quality Code*. In purpose and timing the HEAR provides a different emphasis to the DS. To reiterate, firstly we seek to provide students with more information on their achievements, formal and informal. Second, we wish to help them present themselves to future employers and thirdly, we see the HEAR as a formative document, not just something that is issued at the end of a programme. However, in utilising the structure of the DS, the HEAR is intended to enable institutions to meet DS requirements. Indications from those who have already issued HEARs to their graduates are that the number of requests for the DS is almost entirely eliminated. In addition, discussions on the relationship of the HEAR to the DS 'label' are continuing.

Consistency and flexibility

3.26

The HEAR will provide wider information contextualising any summative judgement. The introduction of a grade point average system (GPA), or any other approach, by institutions would be compatible with the HEAR, which will provide a common, sector-wide framework for containing alternative recording methods.

PART 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

4.1

We have fulfilled the remit set us by the previous Steering Group. The extensive and intensive nature of the trialling has provided our group with confidence that we have captured, considered and resolved the main issues and challenges that institutions will encounter in introducing and implementing the HEAR. This has enabled us to devise appropriate processes and procedures for using the HEAR, as well as to prepare and publish practical, evidence-based guidance on all of the key aspects that will be of concern to institutions in taking the work forward. Although it represents a change, and possibly in some cases a challenge, to existing practice, the experience of the trialling institutions has convinced us that it can be implemented across a diverse range of institutions. Moreover, as time goes on, and the HEAR becomes embedded, the benefits will vastly outweigh the initial investment required.

4.2

The HEAR will prove a most effective use of institutional resources, focused on better meeting the information needs of students and employers, clearly and concisely. It will do justice to student achievements by making fuller use of institutional information about achievement thus also acknowledging more fully the experience that UK higher education institutions offer students in the 21st century. Once it starts to be implemented systematically and fully across the sector, more benefits may be realised as the potential for using the HEAR creatively unfolds. For example, the potential for the HEAR to become a focus to support ongoing student development is there, but how institutions develop that is yet to be determined and requires further exploration. Expectations are already high and the group believes these will be both fulfilled and fuelled as graduates from participating institutions start to find their HEARs to be valuable in practice.

4.3

We therefore commend our work to the representative bodies and seek their endorsement of a sector-wide implementation from academic year 2012–13. We designed our proposals to meet with approval from the sector and believe we have achieved that. The sector, simultaneously with our work, has almost spontaneously begun to adopt the HEAR, providing evidence of this. Over the last four years, polite interest has transformed into considerable enthusiasm in the sector. We can also say with confidence, from the trialling and other work, that two of the other key stakeholder groups – students and employers – are enthusiastic about the introduction of the HEAR.

Recommendation

4.4

The group knows these proposals will land on fertile ground. The timescales for full implementation are tight – even though many institutions are already undertaking HEAR development activities – but we cannot suggest otherwise than that, if they have not already begun, institutions that want to introduce it should make a start now to work on developing the HEAR. A full suite of guidance materials and other resources is in place to support implementation. Formal endorsement from the heads of institutions will provide the final spur in encouraging the sector to take the proposals forward with confidence. We therefore make one simple recommendation:

The Burgess Implementation Steering Group recommends that the representative bodies commend the HEAR to be adopted sector-wide for students entering higher education in academic year 2012–13.

The extensive and intensive nature of the trialling has provided our group with confidence that we have captured, considered and resolved the main issues and challenges that institutions will encounter in introducing and implementing the HEAR.

PART 5

NEXT STEPS, SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION AND ONGOING MAINTENANCE

5.1

The Implementation Steering Group has met its objectives. However, whilst substantial progress is already being made by institutions in introducing the HEAR, they, and institutions new to the HEAR, will need continued support and advice. Furthermore, the HEAR is owned by the sector, and the sector will need a mechanism whereby it can continue to be engaged with the HEAR, providing strategic leadership and ongoing endorsement, as well as overseeing implementation and considering maintenance issues, through new management and governance arrangements.

Governance

5.2

This new governance mechanism will be provided by the current Implementation Steering Group evolving into a smaller Strategic Advisory Group, meeting twice a year or so, to give strategic direction to the work of the HEAR. The Strategic Advisory Group will comprise representatives of institutions, the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR). The key sector organisations will both be represented on, and directly support, the group: Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE, the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the funding councils, JISC, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Terms of reference

The Strategic Advisory Group will:

- report to Universities UK and GuildHE
- provide a mechanism for independent, strategic leadership of the HEAR work
- continue to engage the sector at a high level and bring together key stakeholders
- monitor uptake (eg by institutions) and use of the HEAR (eg by students and employers)
- commission and oversee evaluations
- adjudicate on issues where necessary

Operational support and maintenance

5.3

The HEAR will require ongoing operational support. The HEA already has a clear strategic commitment to the HEAR and has been involved in all of the supporting activities so far. It also operates on a UK-wide basis and is an agency of both UUK and GuildHE. This makes it ideally placed to be the central focus for ongoing support and maintenance of the HEAR, whilst still engaging the organisations and institutions participating in the Strategic Advisory Group.

5.4

As with the current arrangement, regular meetings of officers of UUK, GuildHE, CRA, HEA, HESA and JISC to support the detailed work of the HEAR programme should continue, with the QAA invited to join this officers' management group.

The HEA already has a clear strategic commitment to the HEAR and has been involved in all of the supporting activities so far.

Going forward

Workplan

5.5

In terms of ongoing support and maintenance the HEA will:

- support all meetings of the Strategic Advisory Group and officers' group
- be the central source of information about the HEAR for institutions, students, employers and other stakeholders, including interest from international institutions and organisations
- develop and maintain the HEAR website (www.hear.ac.uk), home to all of the guidance on the HEAR and supporting resources including conference materials
- support institutions with implementation of the HEAR including managing the introductory support for new adopters and supporting the email networks of practitioners
- work with JISC and HESA to continue technical support and work with vendors
- work with the Strategic Advisory Group and officers to ensure the HEAR is implemented consistently and influence and manage any future directions and development of the HEAR
- manage any future development of guidance
- work with UUK, GuildHE and the funding councils on an evaluation of the HEAR in two to three years' time

The HEA will conduct all of this work in partnership, drawing particularly on the strengths and expertise of the CRA.

5.6

A proposed timetable for future activities is outlined in the table below.

Implementing the HEAR: next steps

Action	Lead	Timetable
Endorsement from UUK and GuildHE	UUK, GuildHE	June 2012
Sector begins implementing HEAR	HEIs	AY 2012-13
Inaugural meeting of Management Group	HEA	September 2012
Inaugural meeting of Strategic Advisory Group	Members	October 2012
Website live	HEA	October 2012
Launch of HEAR	HEA, UUK, GuildHE	October 2012
Evaluation of HEAR	HEA, UUK, GuildHE, QAA	January 2015

5.7

As its own involvement winds up, the Implementation Steering Group notes that there are a number of ongoing issues which will need more detailed consideration by the Strategic Advisory Group as implementation extends and progresses. These include the following:

- Private providers of higher education may also wish to adopt the HEAR in the context of the QAA's *UK Quality Code*. Further consideration will need to be given to how best to engage such private providers, including in the ongoing arrangements for governance and support.
- Although contact has been made with some further education colleges with significant higher education provision, many others may wish to adopt the HEAR. Further consideration will also need to be given to how best to engage these colleges in the ongoing arrangements for governance and support.
- There are particular issues for part-time and distance learning students who wish to develop their HEARs. Many institutions are already developing policies and practice to address these and this could usefully be captured and shared with others.
- Arrangements for developing the HEAR for graduate students – with which some institutions are currently involved – are likely to be of interest to many institutions.
- Further work with employers and professional bodies will be needed to raise awareness and support effective use.
- Compatibility and compliance with the European Diploma Supplement will be an ongoing issue.
- Arrangements for monitoring student use of the HEAR should be developed and put in place.
- In the interests of efficiency and effectiveness, there is a need for ongoing discussions with online recruitment companies to ensure the electronic nature of the HEAR is fully exploited.

APPENDIX

Acronyms

AGR – Association of Graduate Recruiters

BIS – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

BISG – Burgess Implementation Steering Group

BUCS – British Universities and Colleges Sport

CRA – Centre for Recording Achievement

DEL(NI) – Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)

DS – European Diploma Supplement

ECTS – European Credit Transfer System

FEC – Further education college

FHEQ – Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

GPA – Grade point average

HEA – Higher Education Academy

HEAR – Higher Education Achievement Report

HEDD – Higher Education Degree Datacheck

HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEIs – Higher education institutions

HEFCW – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency

JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

NUS – National Union of Students

PDP – Personal development planning

PLR – Personal Learning Record

PSRB – Professional, statutory and regulatory body

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SFC – Scottish Funding Council

sparqs – Student Participation in Quality in Scotland

UCISA – Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association

UUK – Universities UK

Glossary

Achievement

Accomplishing and demonstrating outcomes that a higher education experience is intended to promote.

Assessment

The process of acquiring information about what has been learned and achieved through a higher education experience, and the use of such information to make judgements about the quality of learning and the standards of achievement. Assessment might be conducted by a teacher, by a group of students (peer assessment) or by an individual student (self-assessment).

Assessment 'formative'

The diagnostic use of assessment to provide feedback to teachers and help students evaluate their learning during their learning experience.

Assessment 'summative'

The process of collecting data about student achievement and reaching a decision about the overall extent and quality of student learning. It does not matter whether data is accumulated during a course, produced at the end, or both. It is used for certifying achievement, reporting grades on academic records, and determining course credits.

Attainment

The act of achieving or accomplishing an intended learning outcome or personal aim or goal.

Classification

The act of grouping students at the end of their programme into categories that reflect different levels of overall academic performance.

Competence

The ability to use and apply knowledge and skill appropriately in a particular situation to achieve a desired outcome. A number or letter representing a student's overall performance in work that has been assessed.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

Developed by the European Commission to enable the recognition of study periods abroad, funded under the Erasmus and similar programmes. It has three constituent elements:

1) an information pack/course catalogue for incoming students from outside the nation of the host institution which includes:

2) a learning agreement specifying the courses to be taken, and agreed by the student and his home university and the host university

3) a transcript of records detailing the student's performance in the courses taken, calculated in the local grading system and ECTS grades

ECTS grades (norm referencing system)

All students successfully passing the evaluation or examination are listed from the student(s) with the highest mark to the student(s) with the lowest mark. Then, within the list, the precise grade points for the five different ECTS percentile groups from 'A' to 'E' are established and lines drawn to indicate the dividing points between:

'A' = the top 10 percentile

'B' = the next 25 percentile

'C' = the next 30 percentile

'D' = the next 25 percentile

'E' = the remaining 10 percentile

European Diploma Supplement (DS)

The Diploma Supplement developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES is intended to provide a specification for a pan-European transcript. It differs from the UK transcript in providing more detail about the programmes of study, the languages of instruction and assessment, and information about the national educational system and awards frameworks in which the programme of study was undertaken. The UK has agreed to implement the DS as part of the Bologna agreement.

Grade

A measure of the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been demonstrated.

Grade point

In North America and those parts of the world that have adopted the United States system, the predominant grading scale is the grade point average scale, which comprises letter codes and numerical grades that span the range 0 to 4 points divided in 0.1 increments. The most common system is an A, B, C, D, E, F system: each letter is equivalent to a grade point, often 4 for A, 3 for B, 2 for C, 1 for D, and 0 for F. The main difference within the GPA system is whether or not institutions or schools use plus or minus grades (eg A+, A, A-).

Grade point average (GPA)

A measure of a student's academic achievement calculated by dividing the total number of grade points received by the total number attempted.

Honours degree

An honours degree is a Bachelors' degree which involves the student in advanced or distinguished study.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning was defined by the 1997 Dearing report as 'the practice of students of all ages and backgrounds pursuing education and training throughout life' (Dearing, 1997: 415). A lifelong learning culture is characterised by a recognition on the part of government, education providers and learners themselves that learning can, and should, take place in a range of settings and modes and at all ages and stages of life and is not simply a series of one-off opportunities which ends when formal schooling/college/university ends.

Outcome 'intended'

Descriptions of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their learning experiences.

Outcome 'actual'

The gains in learning that result from a learning experience. These are normally evaluated with reference to the intended outcomes for the experience but there are also likely to be unanticipated outcomes for individual students.

Performance

The act of doing something successfully. It involves using and applying knowledge and skill appropriately rather than merely possessing the knowledge and skill to do something.

Personal development planning (PDP)

A structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect on their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational, and career development. PDP is a proxy for a number of approaches to learning that attempt to connect and draw benefit from reflection, recording and action planning. PDP encourages learners to plan their own learning, to act on their plans, to evaluate their learning and to generate evidence of learning.

Portfolio

A paper-based or electronic file produced and maintained by a learner to collect and organise their thoughts, ideas, descriptions of experiences, interactions, products and other evidence of learning, and reflections on their experiences and learning. The learner may draw on this type of personal knowledge to represent themselves and their achievements to others; to display particular features of their work; or to help themselves plan their future learning and personal development. Many higher education institutions see portfolios as a way of encouraging learners to take on more responsibility for managing their own learning and development. They are an important tool for helping learners relate their higher education learning and wider experiences to the things that employers are interested in.

Progress File

The Progress File contains records of a student's learning and achievements (transcripts and personal records) and a system of personal development planning.

Referencing 'norm referencing'

An assessment strategy in which judgements are made in terms of ranking subjects without reference to a fixed standard.

Referencing 'criterion referencing'

An assessment strategy in which judgements are made against defined assessment criteria.

Summative information

Summative information about a student's learning and achievement can be provided in the form of:

- numerical or alphanumeric information: marks, letter-coded grades, grade point averages
- descriptors of performance
- extended narratives
- profiles that blend different forms of information about a learner's abilities and achievements

Summative judgement

The overall judgement made about a student's performance. For an honours degree in the UK higher education system, this is usually expressed in the form of First, Upper Second, Lower Second, Third, Pass or Fail. Reaching a summative judgement about a student's overall level of achievement for something as complex as a degree programme is not a simple matter. It begins with the evaluation of performance against intended learning outcomes and explicit

assessment criteria for a particular assessment task. The assessment is marked (scored against a marking scheme) and/or graded (assigned to a category reflecting the level and quality of response). The marks/grades of different assessments that count towards the award are then combined using a formula or algorithm (eg at the end of a semester, programme year or programme) to reach an overall level of performance. This is normally an automated and mechanistic process, although academic judgement is required when complexities are encountered such as particular circumstances that affect a student's performance. Judgement is then guided by a set of rules.

Summative statistic

A number, letter grade or classification that conflates all assessed academic achievements within a learner's programme of study.

Transcript 'academic'

An authoritative and official record of a learner's programme of study, the grades they have achieved and the credit they have gained. The HE Progress File sets out a specification for a transcript. The European Diploma Supplement sets out a data set for a pan-European transcript.

Transcript 'narrative'

Authoritative and evaluative descriptive statements about a student's learning and achievement. Narrative transcripts contain descriptive evaluations and judgements of a student's abilities and capabilities and perhaps also their attitudes to engaging in learning. They may be produced solely by a tutor or by a tutor in consultation with a student. Narrative transcripts may be the only form of summative statement or they may be used in conjunction with a record of the courses studied, the credit gained and the marks or grades (grade point averages for courses) achieved.

Transcript 'summative'

The transcript a student receives after completing a programme of study. Its primary purpose is to provide an official record of a student's programme of learning and achievement.

Transcript 'formative'

The transcript a student receives while they are enrolled on a programme of study. Its primary purpose is to enable them to monitor their academic progress.

ANNEXE A

Terms of reference

To implement the recommendations contained in the report *Beyond the honours degree classification*, namely to:

- trial the proposed Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)
- develop a guide for employers on using the HEAR
- develop the recording of non-formal learning
- develop and consider the feasibility and impact of electronic issues
- take forward a wider debate about assessment issues and practices
- consider alternatives to degree classification

In doing so to ensure that:

- all work-streams are effectively costed and planned
- funding is secured for work-streams that need additional funding
- each work-stream has a clear focus
- the various work-streams form a coherent body of work and identify dependencies and timings
- effective communication between agencies is encouraged and there is shared awareness of key projects and issues
- the sector, employers and students are effectively engaged in the work-streams and the work of the group
- the work-streams are effectively monitored
- a final report is produced outlining the results of the work-streams and proposals for change and a wide consultation conducted

Membership

Current members:

Professor Sir Robert Burgess

Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester (Chair)

Professor Clive Agnew

Vice-President, Teaching, Learning and Students, University of Manchester

Professor Richard Barnett

Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster

Mr Liam Burns

President, National Union of Students

Professor Suzanne Cholerton

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, Newcastle University

Professor Pete Downes

Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Dundee

Mr Carl Gilleard

Chief Executive, Association of Graduate Recruiters

Professor Michael Gunn

Vice-Chancellor, Staffordshire University

Professor Stephen Hill

Director of Teaching and Learning Innovation, University of Gloucestershire

Dr Allan Howells

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Operations, Glyndŵr University

Mr Stephen Isherwood

Senior Manager, Graduate Recruitment, Ernst & Young

Professor John Last

Principal, Norwich University College of the Arts

Professor Stephanie Marshall

Deputy Chief Executive, Research and Policy, Higher Education Academy

Mr Stephen Marston

Vice-Chancellor, University of Gloucestershire

Professor April McMahon

Vice-Chancellor, Aberystwyth University

Dr Jayne Mitchell

Director of Development & Enhancement Group, Quality Assurance Agency

Professor Anton Muscatelli

Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Glasgow

Professor Paul O'Prey

Vice-Chancellor, University of Roehampton

Professor Nigel Seaton

(formerly) Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
University of Surrey

Mr Peter Williams

(formerly) Chief Executive, Quality Assurance
Agency (retired)

Former members:

Ms Pauline Aldous

Academic Registrar, York St John University

Professor Patricia Broadfoot

(formerly) Vice-Chancellor, University of
Gloucestershire (retired)

Professor Tony Chapman

Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Cardiff Metropolitan
University

Mr Aaron Porter

(formerly) President, National Union of Students

Professor Paul Ramsden

(formerly) Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy
(retired)

Professor Ella Ritchie

(formerly) Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and
Learning, University of Newcastle

Professor Colin Stirling

(formerly) Vice-President for Teaching and Learning,
University of Manchester

Mrs Ann Tate

(formerly) Vice-Chancellor, University of Northampton
(retired)

Professor Elaine Thomas

(formerly) Rector, University College for the Creative
Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone
and Rochester (retired)

Professor Paul Webley

Director and Principal, School of Oriental
and African Studies

Professor Diane Willcocks

(formerly) Vice-Chancellor, York St John University
(retired)

Observers:

Mr Keith Barker

HE Policy Advisor, Department for Employment and
Learning Northern Ireland

Mr Gus MacLeod

Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Funding Council

Dr Cliona O'Neill

Senior Learning and Teaching Manager, Higher
Education Funding Council for Wales

Ms Sheila Wolfenden

Higher Education Policy Adviser, Higher Education
Funding Council for England

Supporting officers:

Mr Greg Wade

Policy Adviser, Universities UK

Mrs Helen Bowles

Policy Adviser and Deputy CEO, GuildHE

Mrs Jo Wood

Assistant Registrar, University of Leicester

Ms Jane Denholm

Consultant, Critical Thinking

Mrs Elaine Payne

Assistant Director for Policy, Higher Education
Academy

Mr Rob Ward

Director, Centre for Recording Achievement

Andy Youell

Director of Quality & Development, Higher Education
Statistics Agency

Ruth Drysdale

Programme Manager, JISC e-learning Programme,
JISC

ANNEXE B

Beyond the honours degree classification (2007) – work-streams and timetable

Table 1: Developing the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) approach – proposed timetable

Action/role	Lead	Participating/supporting	Timetable	Estimated cost/resources and funder/provider
Sector response to report: In-principle decision to implement HEAR and decision to undertake further development	UUK, GuildHE	Funding councils, QAA, HEA	By December 2007	UUK, GuildHE
Formation of a Professional Development Group to coordinate work to take proposals forward	UUK, GuildHE	Funding councils, QAA, HEA	By December 2007	Meeting costs – UUK, GuildHE Admin support – UUK, GuildHE Travel costs – funding councils Research costs – funding councils
Take forward development of core components of the HEAR	HEA, QAA	CRA, QAA, UK Europe Unit, NUS, AGR, UUK, GuildHE	Starting January 2008	Meeting costs – UUK, GuildHE HEA, QAA Admin support – UUK, GuildHE, HEA, QAA
Piloting and trialling with student groups and employers			Trialling begins January 2009	Travel costs – each organisation
Develop a Guide for Employers on using the HEAR			Guide commissioned autumn 2009 Guide circulated summer 2010	Trialling contract – funding councils Publication contract and costs – funding councils
Work on measuring and recording achievements of non-formal learning	CRA	CRA, HEA, NUS	Ongoing and parallel to development of HEAR	From existing sources
The development, feasibility and impact of electronic issues	JISC	Progress Files Implementation Group	Project starts January 2008 Reports December 2008	Specific research project and publication – JISC/funding councils
Taking forward a wider debate about the assessment issues and practices	HEA	UUK, GuildHE, QAA, funding councils	Series of workshops starting January 2008 Series of research reports published from May 2008	Admin support Conference costs Publication contracts and costs – HEA/funding councils
Universal sector use of HEAR	HEIs		2010-11	Administrative costs – funding councils

ANNEXE C

Background and case for change

Background

C1

The genesis of our current work on measuring and recording student achievement is the UK government's 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, which invited the English higher education sector to consider the provision of information about student achievement and the honours degree classification. This gave rise to two succeeding exercises, both chaired by Professor Sir Robert Burgess. *The Report of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Scoping Group*, published in November 2004, established the case for change and paved the way for further work. The proposals were tested with the sector and strongly endorsed. This was taken forward by a new group which, in acknowledgement of the salience of the issues for the whole of UK higher education, was widened out to include representation from across the UK.

C2

That group – known as the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group – published its report – *Beyond the honours degree classification* – in 2007. The report proposed that a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) should, in future, be the central vehicle for recording all undergraduate-level higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions. The proposal built on the model of a combined transcript/diploma supplement. Having spent over two years giving 'extensive consideration to the issues which impact upon measuring and recording student achievement', the group concluded 'we are confident that we have critiqued the honours degree classification system accurately, and identified the elements of a better system that would serve the interests of UK higher education stakeholders well'. The group proposed 'a period of exploration, development and testing in stages, with a view to arriving at a new, complementary, approach'.²⁷ It also identified a series of work-streams and provided a timetable for action on these (see Annexe B).

C3

In February 2008, following consideration of the 2007 report, the two sector representative bodies established an Implementation Steering Group, again under the chairmanship of Sir Robert, to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. The outcomes are reported in the main body of this report. As before, membership of the group was drawn from higher education institutions across the UK, as well as representatives of a number of the key agencies and organisations that would be able to advise on the development of the HEAR, including student and employer representatives. The four UK funding bodies, DELNI, HEFCE, HEFCW and SFC, provided financial support for the work and HEFCE, HEFCW and DELNI were represented on the group. The SFC, and several other important contacts, contributed as corresponding members. A full list of members, and terms of reference for the group, are at Annexe A.

²⁷ UUK 2007 p. 34

Case for change

C4

The Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group spent two years examining the case for changing the system of honours degree classification, concluding that 'a range of related and highly compelling factors have converged to make the case for change inevitable, and indeed, long overdue'. The detail is contained in the report.

The group's main conclusions were:

- 'A summative system, which gives the appearance of "signing-off" a person's education with a simple numerical indicator, is at odds with lifelong learning. It encourages students and employers to focus on one final outcome and perceived "end point", rather than opening them to the concept of a range of different types and levels of achievement, which are each part of an ongoing process of learning that will continue beyond the attainment of their degree.

- There is a need to do justice to the full range of student experience by allowing a wider recognition of achievement.

- The higher education sector has been transformed out of all recognition from that which gave rise to the traditional honours degree classification mechanism, which was devised for a traditional concept of higher education.

- The present system cannot capture achievement in some key areas of interest to students and employers and many employers could be missing out on the skills and experience of potential recruits merely because these students had not attained a First/Upper Second.

- The focus on the top two degree classes wrongly reinforces an impression that a Lower Second or a Third Class degree is not an achievement when, in fact students with such degrees have met the standard required for honours degree level, graduate qualifications.

- The means of representing student achievement should be radically reformed – ideally to replace the summative judgement with a more detailed set of information.'²⁸

C5

In his Foreword to *Beyond the honours degree classification*, the chair summarised the issues thus:

- 'Like the Scoping Group before us, we have found the UK honours degree classification system wanting. We considered different forms of summative scale – shorter and longer – but the challenges we have identified are associated with any form of summative judgement. By this phrase summative judgement we mean the overall judgement made about a student's performance. For an honours degree in the UK higher education system, this is usually expressed in the form of First, Upper Second, Lower Second, Third, Pass or Fail. The evidence is conclusive that, while it endures, it will actively inhibit the use of wider information.

- The persistence of a system that concentrates on a single summative judgement results in a fixation on achieving a number that is considered "good". This drives the behaviour of academic staff and students and works to the detriment of the currency of other information. When they leave university, graduates deserve more than a single number to sum up their achievements. We have concluded that this wider information could be conveyed through the European Diploma Supplement and an expanded academic transcript.

- We recommend developing what we are calling, at least in the interim, a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as the key vehicle for measuring and recording student achievement. The HEAR will need to be considered and developed by the sector and tested with other groups that have an interest in this – particularly students and employers. Our approach is to develop a reporting system that proves itself by realising a wide range of opportunities without destabilising the existing system.'²⁹

²⁸ UUK 2007 p. 11

²⁹ UUK 2007 p. 5

ANNEXE D

Methodology

D1

The Burgess Implementation Steering Group ('the group') met 14 times between February 2008 and April 2012. Acting as an overarching monitoring body, it spent a considerable proportion of its meetings receiving updates from the HEAR trialling institutions and considering and resolving the range of strategic and practical issues that came to light.

D2

Engaging the sector and other key stakeholders has been crucial from the outset. As well as regular seminars, briefings and workshops, we have held a number of UK conferences and national events at which trialling institutions, students and employers shared their experiences of trialling the HEAR with the sector and other stakeholders, and gathered their feedback.

Key communication points

Date	Type	Audience/purpose
April 2010 and May 2011	Chair met academic registrars	To raise awareness and hear issues from perspective of central institutional administration
February 2010	National event, Scotland	Awareness raising among key stakeholders
September 2010	National event, Wales	Awareness raising among key stakeholders
November 2010	National conference, London	Awareness raising among key stakeholders
April 2011	Chair attended QAA PSRB forum	Meeting PSRBs and explaining HEAR to them
November 2011	Letter from chair to all UK vice-chancellors and heads of HE institutions	In response to growing interest, offering HEAR 'starter pack' and support to all HEIs in the UK
November 2011	Letter from chair to heads of English FECs with large amounts of HE provision	Awareness raising and offering starter pack
November 2011	National conference, London	Awareness raising among key stakeholders – especially those who had requested the starter pack
April 2012	Meeting with head of Higher Education/ Erasmus Unit, European Commission	To clarify compliance with the European Diploma Supplement
June 2012	Letter from chair to all PSRBs	Awareness raising

In addition, during 2011–12, a series of practical workshops and seminars were held throughout the UK.

Trialling

D3

The vision, template, operating principles and basic tenets for the HEAR were passed to the group from the previous Burgess exercises, with the 2007 report stating that 'these proposals are explicitly expressed as stages in a journey. They can provide direction only, because, although we have specified our desired end point, we cannot be sure until the development work has been undertaken whether it is feasible to reach it'.³⁰ In particular, the group was charged with trialling the draft template for the HEAR, outlined in the 2007 report, with a view to developing it into an effective and useful tool that could be recommended to the sector as a whole for adoption.

D4

An extensive and thorough programme of trialling of the HEAR template was taken forward by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) with assistance from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and JISC. A total of 30 higher education institutions, drawn from all parts of the UK, and representing the diversity of UK higher education institutions in terms of type, size and mission, took part in trialling the HEAR. The first wave of 18 institutions began work in August 2008. An additional 12 joined in January 2010, reflecting the growing sector interest in the HEAR as our work progressed. The group resolved at the outset that, if the trialling was restricted to those institutions that found the process straightforward, it would not be sufficiently robust. The aim was to identify issues and challenges in the trialling so that they could be addressed, and solutions tested, as part of an ongoing, iterative process. We were minded to ensure, particularly in the first wave of 18 institutions, that the group was representative and not solely comprised of enthusiasts and early-adopters.

D5

Trialling has taken place in formative stages, with lessons, solutions and decisions from each being used and tested at the next. It has also widened out over the project. The initial 18 trialling institutions considered the HEAR template in relation to data for a limited number of students who had recently graduated in accountancy, biological sciences, creative arts and English. The second phase was extended to include engineering, medicine and teacher education and involved 'live' data for students over all undergraduate years, including final year students who graduated in summer 2010.

D6

The first phase tested the HEAR to ensure that it was compatible with student record systems and to identify a range of initial issues in relation to implementation. Phase one institutions were encouraged to interpret the HEAR widely, and as they thought appropriate. The group considered the very different approaches that resulted and this helpfully focused our minds on what would, and would not, work. Operating principles began to emerge from our discussions, as well as some key decisions about the specification for the HEAR and the direction of the trialling, which were fed back into the process.

D7

The outcomes from the first phase trialling were positive but the group – mindful that the HEAR could eventually be rolled out to almost two million undergraduate students in 165 higher education institutions – was insistent that scalability was tested, and that the practical implications of implementing the HEAR across a large and diverse higher education sector were fully addressed, before recommending wider adoption. The second phase of trialling began explicitly testing the feasibility of full-scale implementation of the HEAR.

³⁰ UUK 2007 paragraph 58

D8

By November 2011, interest from the rest of the sector had grown substantially. We consequently widened the offer of implementation support to the entire sector by preparing and issuing a 'Starter Pack' to those institutions wishing to take these developments ahead immediately, and in advance of any sector-wide activity.³¹ This was actioned through the chair writing personally to every head of a UK higher education institution in membership of UUK or GuildHE. The response was highly encouraging. We received over 60 additional registrations of interest by March 2012 which, including the trialling institutions, brought the total to more than 90 institutions.

D9

Our work also fully engaged students and employers both through the trialling within the institutions and through national workshops and meetings. Trialling institutions ensured their own students' unions were fully involved in the internal process and, at national level, the NUS contributed to discussions and events as well as coordinating and issuing guidance to students' unions to use with students. The group made much use of the good offices of the Association of Graduate Recruiters and its contacts. Trialling institutions also made use of their contacts with employers to test out developments and we have been engaged nationally in discussing with employers how they could use the HEAR and in consulting them about the content, nature and format of the guidance they will need. Both students and employers have reacted positively to the outcomes from the trials, suggesting approaches and improvements.

³¹ Letter from chair of Implementation Steering Group to UK vice-chancellors, November 2011

ANNEXE E

Resolving key questions, issues and challenges

E1

The trialling was designed to identify, highlight and test challenges. In overseeing the trialling, the group considered and resolved a wide range of matters – both practical and strategic – which have contributed to the shape and content of the HEAR and how it will be implemented. The following paragraphs outline the main issues and discussions under the headings of:

Academic/content-related issues

Administrative issues

Technical issues

Of course, these are not mutually exclusive categories, but they serve as a framework for discussing the key issues. Some relate to immediate issues that will arise on initial implementation. Clearly, these will become less of a challenge once the HEAR has become widely embedded practice. Others are more concerned with establishing sustainable practice. It is gratifying that, of the issues raised at the November 2011 conference by newly engaged institutions belonging to the freshly extended group, none were new to us.

Academic/content-related issues

E2

A number of academic and content-related issues and challenges arose during the trialling. These are considered here.

Initial recipients

E3

In principle, the group believes the HEAR should be available to all those students who could benefit from it. For simplicity, and to have immediate impact on a large group of students, we are proposing that the HEAR should be targeted at full-time undergraduate first-degree students, covering each year of study. As a matter of course, those studying foundation degrees and other sub-honours degree qualifications are likely to benefit by being included in this group and we are aware that they are, already, in some institutions. We are also aware that there is interest in the sector in making the HEAR available to other students – particularly part-time undergraduate and taught postgraduate students – and anticipate demand from students themselves for this. Again, some institutions are already making provision for these students. As the HEAR becomes embedded and institutions become comfortable with it, we can see every reason to widen out the HEAR to other groups as appropriate. We have prepared guidance to ensure the HEAR is not inadvertently exclusive of certain groups of students (eg part-time students) and propose that this situation is monitored. In addition, we have taken care to ensure that other significant providers of higher education are sufficiently involved in the HEAR. Information has been circulated to large, English further education colleges that offer higher education programmes. Their response has been positive and encouraging, and the information will be widened out to others in due course.

Extent of recording

E4

The group had lengthy discussions on whether, and to what extent, the HEAR should be a record of progression or a record of attainment. The former approach would require the HEAR to record the whole journey taken by the student, incorporating potentially negative information including fails, low marks and resits. The latter would focus largely on the actual attainment of key milestones towards the qualification. Employers we spoke to were firmly of the view that it must be a complete record – representing ‘attainment only’ would be regarded by some as a ‘cover-up’ – adding that the finest degree of granularity will help employers take better decisions. Student representatives have been more cautious, fearing that ‘negative’ information about a student, without context, might be used against them and become another crude means of sifting. Even where there are mitigating circumstances to explain a failed module,

the circumstances could be such that the student would not wish to have to explain them to outsiders. In addition, rules regarding resits and ways of recording academic incidents vary within and between institutions. For example, not turning up to an exam is very different from plagiarism, although the code might look the same in the student record. Finally, if the HEAR was to record everything, students might be deterred from taking risks with new or difficult subjects.

E5

In addition, we have also had a number of discussions about whether the HEAR should include first year marks, which often do not count towards the final degree, or whether it should start with year two. To meet requirements for the European Diploma Supplement (DS) it must contain marks from all years and compatibility with the DS requirements has guided our thinking.

E6

Mindful of all of this, we have agreed that for simplicity, clarity and completeness, the HEAR will start in the first year that a student starts studying in higher education. Thus core first year marks and everything that counts towards the final degree result should be recorded, including fails and low marks. This approach obviates the need to determine which first year course marks count towards the final degree and it also means that any significant achievement in year one, eg a prize for first year performance, is recorded. As a general rule, Section 6.1 applies to all years, whereas 4.3 applies to assessments that count towards the final degree result, but includes requirements to pass year one in order to be allowed to proceed.³²

E7

This level of transparency will also show the decisions made by institutions in combining marks to create a degree award and, consequently, institutions might have to explain how they made an award from the range of individual module marks.

E8

There may be instances where a student may not want information recorded in their HEAR – this might be the case where such information would provide indications of political affiliation or sexuality, for example. Students should be able to request that this information does not appear in the HEAR. This opt out applies to Section 6.1 only. Since the HEAR will become fixed on graduation, institutions will need to determine processes for finalising it, perhaps allowing a window of opportunity before this is done, so that students have a chance to reflect about the information contained in what will become a permanent record.

Recording academic results

E9

Section 4 is the largest in the HEAR and contains information on programme content and results gained. Within this, Section 4.3, Programme details, is key to what we aim to achieve with the HEAR. It provides substantial opportunity for 'drilling down' to a deeper level, enabling institutions to represent a much more detailed record of student achievement than they previously could. Producing module marks to the detail required, at the same time as fulfilling our requirement that the HEAR should be a limited number of pages, has been challenging for some of the trialling institutions. The trialling has been crucial to resolving this and to developing the approach we are commending, one that is neither over-complex nor lengthy.

E10

Section 4.5 is where the overall classification of the qualification will be recorded. In the case of an honours degree, for example, this is where the final honours degree classification mark will be found. Towards the latter end of our work, we became aware that a small group of institutions were considering moving to a grade point average (GPA) system. Past Burgess groups explored a number of alternatives to the honours degree classification but concluded that none of these approaches offered clear advantages over the current system. The decision was made, therefore, that, rather than relying on a final summative judgement, it would be preferable to offer a wider view of student achievement as exemplified in the HEAR. If others in the sector wish to move towards use of a grade point average, that is entirely a matter for them. The HEAR should prove useful to both students and employers in adding richness to the summative judgement, whatever form that takes. Section 4.5 could contain

³² This will apply to second year marks, too, as appropriate, in Scotland.

a GPA – or any other summative judgement – just as easily as it can the honours degree classification mark. Any move to another approach by institutions would be compatible with the HEAR, which will provide a common, sector-wide framework for containing alternative recording methods. We consider this latter attribute to be a further benefit of the HEAR, given employer views that fragmentation in the sector over the means by which achievement is recorded would be confusing and unwelcome.

E11

Notwithstanding this, our main aim is that the deeper module information that dominates this section will, at the very least, provide wider and useful context to the overall classification. We intend that this will mark the beginning of a more sophisticated approach to recording, and considering, information on student achievement. Our overall hope is that the honours degree classification will eventually be eclipsed by the HEAR.

Recording additional information

E12

Section 6.1, Additional information, aims to provide a framework for institutions to use to widen out the picture of student achievement into other academic and non-academic contexts. The *Guidance to inform institutional implementation* proposes that ‘a set of protocols, or criteria, for selection of content for Section 6.1 should be agreed in advance and published across the institution’. The decision on what kind of information should be recognised in this section rests firmly with institutions within the context of common guidelines. It will record a broad range of extracurricular activities and achievements including prizes awarded, employability skills courses, and positions held such as course representative or students’ union officer.

E13

We are confident that the categories proposed are comprehensive. However, it is clear that, whilst assigning some activities to categories will be straightforward, for others it will be less so. In addition, we intend that the very existence of the HEAR should stimulate institutions and students to consider how the widest possible range of activities can be captured and this will necessitate further work, for example, recognising the work students do as ‘ambassadors’ for the institution at open days and in visits to local schools and colleges.

E14

Also, it is key to the credibility of the HEAR that such information can be verified by the institution. We are aware that what may be considered ‘non-formal’ in some institutions is credit-rated in others, eg certain forms of volunteering. In addition, there is a need to distinguish between achievement and experience. Regarding a students’ union officer, for example, it will be up to each institution, signing off on the activity, to determine what constitutes ‘sufficient contribution’.

E15

The group also considered the implications for equal opportunities. As a general rule, the focus of Section 6.1 should be on opportunities open to all students, as appropriate. We acknowledge that students will choose to, or be able to, undertake different activities depending on their personal circumstances and that their main mode of study will also have an effect. A statement relating to equality of opportunity is included in the guidance for institutions and for employers. Referring to Section 6.1, the *Guidance to inform institutional implementation* states that:

Each entry in Section 6.1 should: on the basis of considerations of access and equity cited above, include only opportunities open on an equal basis to all students on the same course/programme (including those available across the institution as a whole).³³

Relationship with PDP and student CVs

E16

We resolved that, whilst the HEAR provides a richer picture of student achievement, it is not intended to provide a record of everything that the student has done. Many activities will be for the student themselves to record in their personal development planning (PDP) document.³⁴ The group is very clear that, although complementary, the HEAR document and PDP document are distinct and different. The HEAR is stewarded by, and the responsibility of, the institution and is about institutional learning opportunities and other achievements that the institution is prepared to verify. Generally, PDP is owned by the student and is about ‘student life’. In practice, institutions may choose to provide a link from the HEAR into PDP or e-portfolio documents. Of course, the exception to this is where PDP processes (eg target setting and review) feature in accredited activity. In these circumstances, the outcomes would be likely to be reflected in the HEAR under credit-based achievements.

³³ Guidance to inform institutional implementation p. 17

³⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/PDPguide.pdf>

E17

Similarly, the HEAR is not an attempt to create a ready-made CV for students. It is our intention that it will provide a readily accessible resource that will inform the student's CV and that it will affect the way students tailor their CVs – resulting in more effective, relevant, targeted applications. We intend that the HEAR will prove to be a useful aide-memoire to students as they assemble information for their CVs.

E18

Students and employers have emphasised to us the importance of intermediary organisations, specifically companies developing online graduate recruitment systems, in graduate marketing and recruitment. These could have a major role in enabling all, or some of, the data contained within the HEAR to be incorporated within online selection systems. This, in turn, will enable data derived from the HEAR to be incorporated into employers' selection processes, and thereby increase the potential for employers to make use of such data and, in time, to evolve systems to fully exploit it. The Wilson report concluded that 'the systems deployed by companies, especially the large corporate graduate recruiters, will require adaptation to exploit this potential'.³⁵

Consequences for assessment**E19**

Intentionally or otherwise, systems can impact on, and drive, processes. The impact of the HEAR will not simply be on the provision of student information but also, potentially, on assessment methods and how institutions organise assessment. We are clear that the HEAR must not become a straightjacket and rule out novel and different forms of assessment. Nor must it constrain student choices – they should be able to experiment with their studies and try new, possibly risky, things. They must not fear that 'weak' marks will look bad in the HEAR. To mitigate this we have clearly separated those courses and assignments that contribute to the final qualification (at Section 4.3) from those that do not (at Section 6.1) in the HEAR. Experimental, additional studies and electives will feature in the latter section.

Administrative issues**E20**

A range of issues relating to the administration and implementation of the HEAR arose during the trialling. Our discussions considered important practical issues including ownership, format and size, timing and cost of implementation. These are discussed below.

'Ownership' and 'stewardship'**E21**

The HEAR is the formal record of a student's higher education achievements. As such, the awarding institution owns and is responsible for it. However, the group has discussed the need to acknowledge that, legally, not all of the information contained (or referred to) in the HEAR will be institutionally generated and owned – for example, the national descriptions of qualifications frameworks. We therefore consider that the term 'stewardship', rather than 'ownership', more accurately describes the role taken by the institution.

European Diploma Supplement**E22**

Many institutions have put a great deal of effort into implementing the European Diploma Supplement (DS) and the group designed the HEAR to avoid the need for institutions to introduce both it and the DS. Thus, the HEAR follows the same structure as the DS. The group, and the chair, have engaged with Bologna experts as work has progressed. The use of the DS 'label' remains an outstanding issue as the group reports but discussions are ongoing to progress this.

Start date**E23**

As described earlier, the HEAR is already beginning to roll out across the sector and we propose that it is adopted by all UK higher education institutions for all new undergraduate-level students during academic year 2012–13. Institutions that are not ready to fully implement the HEAR can develop their academic transcripts in the direction of the HEAR. They can use the HEAR format with incomplete sections, for example stating that they are not yet ready to complete Section 6.1, but cannot rebadge as a HEAR any template that is not the HEAR template. It will, instead, be an enhanced transcript while they are working toward the full use of the HEAR structure.

³⁵ Wilson 2012 paragraph 6.4.1

Trusted third parties

E24

Institutions will each be developing their own protocols for populating Section 6, but there is also scope for some efficiencies, given the nature of some of the national initiatives underway, to act collectively to capture student activity in national initiatives for the HEAR. There is a range of such activities already being considered – eg British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS, UK), Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs, Scotland) and the NUS National Skills Award (UK), which is being developed with Pearson and has the potential to accredit the skills of all students, to name but three – because they have clear existing infrastructure which would enable them to prepare text for inclusion in the HEAR and even to become a ‘trusted third party’ to sign off on student activities. The group is clear, however, that the decision whether or not to use such text rests with individual institutions.

Evolving HEAR

E25

The HEAR is far more than an end-point document. Its formative potential has become clearer through the trialling and discussions with stakeholders. Students may have a wide range of reasons for accessing and using the HEAR prior to finishing their studies – eg for the purposes of reviewing their own progress and identifying skills gaps, alone or with tutors, to support applications for internships, work placements or a period of study abroad as well as applications for graduate employment, or postgraduate study, made during their final year. Employers told us that many of them need, and currently seek, information on candidates prior to graduation. As our work has progressed we have come to conceive of, and see the potential benefits of, the HEAR as a document that will evolve during a student’s career in higher education. It must not, however, become a daily, verified diary of an individual’s life. Subject to institutional provision and agreement, therefore, students should be granted access, or permit others to have access, to the evolving HEAR.

Template

E26

The HEAR contains a great deal of information and, as described earlier, to comply with the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement, and to avoid confusion on the part of users, specifically students and employers, we have determined that there should

be a standard template. All stakeholders need to be clear about the distinctive categories being used and institutions need to know where to assign specific types of activity. Employers need to be able to make comparisons between large numbers of students and graduates. We have designed what we consider to be a simple, clear and consistent document. This cannot be subject to amendment by individual institutions other than being able to add on a limited number of local elements. However, it will be important for institutions to use their own house design styles and brands to make the HEAR their own.

E27

As we have said earlier, we consider Section 6.1 to be an essential part of the HEAR. The group expects that all institutions will complete Section 6.1 when assembling the material to go into a HEAR. We do appreciate that, in the early stages, some institutions might need to phase it in. If an institution is initially unable to complete Section 6.1, then it should indicate this in the HEAR. There will need to be a distinction made between cases of ‘unable to fill in at this stage’ and ‘nothing to report’. In cases where there is no record appropriate to one of the three bulleted headings at 6.1, the heading should not be included.

Format and size

E28

After much discussion, and in the interests of simplicity and clarity, the group agreed that, should a hard copy HEAR be produced, it should be no longer than six pages. Employers would be reluctant to consider an electronic version that was much longer.³⁶ For reasons of usability and economy, it will be issued electronically and this medium means it can include web links that take the reader to additional information, should they require it. Employers have welcomed these decisions, which they consider to be essential. The uploading of HEAR academic information into an online system is seen by them as both time saving for applicants and more trustworthy by recruiters. Students have indicated that they would wish to be able to print out their HEAR, or sections of it, and some employers propose to request parts of it (usually Section 4 and Section 6), in electronic or hard copy, during the recruitment process. In terms of data storage the HEAR should be considered the permanent institutional student record. There will be issues about durability including the links in the document (eg Programme Specifications), which will be subject to change and therefore time-limited.

³⁶ As stated earlier, institutions in Wales adopting the HEAR will need to do so in the context of their Welsh Language Scheme, which may require them to produce a Welsh language HEAR or a bilingual HEAR (bilingual would be longer than six pages).

Resources

E29

The HEAR represents a significant and important change to the way student achievement is identified and presented and will absorb resources at both institutional and national level. This point was raised with us, often, by a wide range of institutions and considered on an ongoing basis in meetings. Most institutions issue an academic transcript and a study conducted by the UK Higher Education International Unit in 2011 revealed that most of the sector is now able to produce a European Diploma Supplement, which means most of the sector has much in place already to be able to produce a HEAR.³⁷

E30

We commissioned a study into the costs to institutions in September 2010.³⁸ The study found that, for many institutions, introducing the HEAR was easier and less expensive than they had envisaged. In some institutions, implementation required little change or additional funding although this was less so in institutions with less developed student records systems. The research indicated that implementing the HEAR in institutions is likely to cover a range between £25,000 and £80,000, depending on the starting point in terms of student record systems. Annual administration costs are likely to be up to £30,000.

Three broad types of implementation were identified:

- those institutions that have a strong track record of delivering the European Diploma Supplement and Academic Transcript that can expect set up costs of approximately £30,000 and additional running costs of £25,000 per annum
- those institutions that need some bespoke development particularly around Sections 4.3 and 6.1 and can expect set up costs of approximately £70,000 and additional running costs of £30,000 per annum
- those institutions that require more fundamental systems and process development to introduce the HEAR and can expect £120,000+ set up costs and additional annual running costs of £80,000

The Costings Guidance contains three scenarios to provide institutions with a guide of the total costs that will need to be allocated for implementation.

E31

The group is sensitive to the costs of implementation, especially given the current economic climate. On the other hand, there is tremendous pressure from students to make these changes and we believe that the introduction of the HEAR will add significant value to the information they receive about their achievements. Much of this information will be derived from existing data, which is currently underutilised – or completely unused – by the need to translate it into a single, summative classification. We are keen to encourage institutions to make creative and extensive use of the HEAR and, although this may have costs, we see it as an important additional resource and service to students, at a time when many are being asked, directly, to pay more towards the costs of their studies.

Technical issues

E32

As our work progressed, the need for more visible and sustained work on technical issues became apparent. The group was at pains to ensure that there would be time to resolve the technical challenges, and also to prepare and issue comprehensive guidance to institutions well in advance of implementation, drawing on the trialling. As described earlier, the trialling was scaled-up and extended in spring 2010, to ensure that the main technical issues were comprehensively tested. The main challenges encountered are discussed below.

Overview

E33

Producing HEARs for students requires various stages of development, with the key steps being:

- design processes to collect the data needed to go into the HEAR and training staff to follow these
- amending IT systems to collect and transfer the electronic and verifiable data
- allowing students to read and distribute their HEAR (in different states of completeness), before and after graduation
- producing and issuing the final version of each HEAR
- storing HEARs securely for up to 40 years
- creating mechanisms for students to grant others (eg employers) access to their HEAR

³⁷ UK Higher Education International Unit 2011 European Activity Survey

³⁸ Oakleigh Consulting reported in December 2010

E34

JISC has been fully involved in helping to develop the technical innovation and interoperability aspects of the HEAR and the results of this work can be found in the various guidance documents and resources detailed at paragraph 1.24 on Resources and available on the HEAR website, www.hear.ac.uk.

Self-assessment**E35**

In particular, JISC has funded the development of a HEAR readiness self-assessment framework, which aims to help institutions to understand and plan for the changes to strategies, policies, systems and processes which will support the production of the HEAR.

Technical requirements**E36**

Since institutions use different systems or use the same systems but in different ways, it would be inappropriate to expect all institutions to engage with the technical aspects of the HEAR, and so deliver the HEAR, in the same way. JISC moderated various email discussion groups and facilitated meetings of trialling institutions, vendors and the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) to discuss how the technical requirements could be delivered in various ways. From these discussions, guidance on various technical architectures for implementing the HEAR was produced. JISC will maintain the latest version of all the technical information for implementing the HEAR.

Updates/Security/Access**E37**

It will be the responsibility of the office of the academic registrar, or equivalent, to collate and verify the data in the HEAR format. This will mean that students and their potential employers will need to have secure access. The JISC Digital Academic Records Exchange (DARE) project was funded to deliver a system for the secure online delivery of degree certificates, transcripts, HEARs and other student data and documents, via Digitary as a shared service. The proposed service is suitable for deployment as software on a hosted cloud platform. Led by Liverpool John Moores University, Project DARE brings together a diverse consortium of institutions with a variety of student record systems.

HESA, the CRA and the University of London Computing Centre all supported this project. In addition 18 other universities have shown an interest in evaluating the resulting service.

E38

The Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) is intended as the first port of call for any individuals or organisations seeking degree verification. It can be used to check that a UK higher education provider existed and was approved by the government at a given date. It provides contact details to direct the user to the appropriate records office for their query. It is particularly useful for employers and postgraduate course providers wanting to verify degree results, and for graduates to request transcripts and replacement certificates such as the HEAR.

E39

The ways in which the HEAR might be linked to the Learner Record Services 'Personal Learning Record' (PLR) and to HESA data collection was explored by The University of Manchester. In a pilot project,³⁹ they added the Unique Learner Number (ULN) to the electronic HEAR, which was produced through the Digitary system that is used by the university. Access for the HEAR through the PLR would be provided by including Document Shares for their HEARs in the students' PLRs. Document Shares are used to allow students and graduates to control access to their secure electronic documents as issued by the institution through Digitary.

Copyright**E40**

The copyright for all guidance documents and supporting materials for the HEAR is vested in Universities UK and GuildHE. Persons in receipt of it at institutions in membership of UUK and GuildHE may copy it in whole or in part solely for use within their institutions. The HEA has developed a new brand for the HEAR, including a new logo, and will consider whether this can be trademarked or copyrighted and potentially developed into a kitemark.

³⁹ See <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/eadministration/ucaspilots/manchesterpilot.aspx>

Recruitment websites

E41

Employer feedback suggests that the electronic nature of HEAR data will be a major benefit arising from the changes (described in detail at paragraph 3.9 onwards). A technical pilot was completed by one institution in 2009 to demonstrate how the electronic higher education transcript element of the HEAR could be produced from an existing student record system using web services. Electronic transcripts were issued for all current and graduated students. In addition, on request by the student, the structured electronic transcript can be uploaded into a recruitment engine which enables employers to target students who fit their desired employment profile. The transcript data is presented as verified by the institution, and is supplemented by unverified student-provided information. Although only one approach, this is a demonstration of how the verified transcript could start helping employers use richer information on students' academic achievements during recruitment.

Personal information

E42

Some personal information, such as date of birth, is required by the DS but for legal reasons many employers report a reluctance to have sight of this during the application process. A technical solution is being designed and implemented to address this.

Conclusion

E43

The extensive and intensive nature of the trialling has provided the group with confidence that we have captured, considered and resolved the main issues and challenges that institutions will encounter in introducing and implementing the HEAR. This has enabled us to devise appropriate processes and procedures for using the HEAR, as well as to prepare and publish practical, evidence-based guidance on all of the key aspects that will be of concern to institutions in taking the work forward.

ANNEXE F

Exemplar HEAR

Outlined in Annexe F is a fictitious example HEAR which follows the guidance for the HEAR to give an illustration of what one might contain. This composite exemplar illustrates – in sections 4 and 6 in particular – a wide range of potential content for the HEAR. The HEARs produced for many universities are unlikely to be so lengthy or complex.



The University of Easthampton

HIGHER EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

(Diploma Supplement)

This Higher Education Achievement Report follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES for the Diploma Supplement.

The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualifications to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

In hard copy format this Higher Education Achievement Report is printed in black ink on paper watermarked with the crest of the university and carries the official university stamp. It is not valid unless in this format. Easthampton also produces HEARs in a digital format. In this case only HEARs accessed via <http://www.eastham.ac.uk/HEAR> can be considered valid and verified.⁴⁰

1 Information identifying the holder of qualification

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1.1 Family name(s): | Other |
| 1.2 Given name(s): | Ann Norma |
| 1.3 Date of birth: | 21-08-1989 |
| 1.4 Student identification number or code: | 900900900/HESA Number 000000 |

HUSID (HESA Unique Student Identifier) is the unique national identifying number for students registered at a UK university. It is defined by HESA, the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency.

2 Information identifying the qualification

- 2.1 **Name of qualification:** Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
The power to award degrees is regulated by law in the UK.
- 2.2 **Main field(s) of study:** French and Management Studies
- 2.3 **Name and status of awarding institution:** University of Easthampton – a body recognised by the UK government with taught and research degree awarding powers
- 2.4 **Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies:**
- 2.5 **Language(s) of instruction/examination:** English and French

⁴⁰ This entry will be determined by the format in which the document is made available and by any decisions within the institution; see Institutional Guidance: Compiling the HEAR (p. 9).

3 Information on the level of the qualification

3.1 Level of qualification: UK Bachelors Degree: with honours level 6; European HEA 1st cycle degree (FQ-EHEA first cycle, end of cycle qualification)

3.2 Official length of programme: four years full time

3.3 Access requirements(s): The normal requirement is 280 UCAS tariff points, including (for students taking the post-A-level route) A2 subject at Grade B in one of the languages to be studied with Grade C or above in the other. Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available in the university's on-line Prospectus at: www.eastham.ac.uk/prospectus08/html

4 Information on the contents and results gained

4.1 Mode of study: Full time. This programme additionally includes study or work experience outside the university (Year 3, compulsory year abroad, including study and work placement in a second language).

4.2 Programme requirements: UK Bachelors Degree with Honours, level 6. The Bachelors degree is obtained after three years of full-time study (180 ECTS) with at least 120 at level 5 and 100 at level 6.

The learner must satisfy the programme requirements as prescribed in the Programme Specification and the Principles and Regulations of the Institution. Please see section 8 for general information and www.eastham.ac.uk for additional detail.

4.3 Programme details:

The following learning outcomes are associated with this programme:

A Knowledge and understanding of:

1. the lexis, grammatical structures, registers and usage of French to BA Honours degree level
2. aspects of the history, society, culture and linguistic development of the French speaking world within Europe
3. an appreciation of the internal diversity of the French-speaking world and of transcultural connectedness of cultures
4. (for students opting to write a dissertation) an in-depth knowledge, appropriate to undergraduate level, of a self-chosen aspect of French studies
5. the theoretical basis of management and key functional areas of business
6. current developments in the practice and theory of business management
7. fundamental concepts of business management relevant to the student becoming a manager in a UK business
8. an understanding of the importance of international business and the drivers of change in business in this country and abroad, including management practice and business cultures in other countries

B Subject-specific/professional skills

1. Receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) skills in French to BA Honours degree standard
2. The ability to perform a range of communicative tasks
3. Mediating skills – the ability to translate non-technical texts from and into the target language, competent professional liaison, interpreting skills
4. The ability to make effective use of language reference materials, such as grammars and dictionaries
5. Study skills for independent language learning
6. Quantitative skills required for managing in a business environment
7. Critical analytical skills to relate theory to practice
8. Analysis of business information and operations for management decision-making

C Cognitive skills

1. The ability to gather, synthesise and evaluate information
2. The ability to undertake independent, critical analysis
3. The ability to organise and present ideas within the framework of a structured, reasoned and informed argument, oral or written
4. The ability to apply appropriate methodologies to specialist areas of study
5. (For students opting to write a dissertation) the ability to design a research project and select and employ appropriate research methodologies
6. Problem solving within the context of business and management

D Key (transferable) skills

1. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing
2. Oral presentation skills
3. Organisational skills: the ability to manage one's time, make plans and set priorities in order to achieve an objective
4. Interpersonal skills: the ability to work creatively and flexibly with others as part of a team, and, in the case of the intercalary project, the ability to conduct an effective interview
5. The ability to adapt and to operate effectively within a different cultural environment
6. The ability to use library and bibliographic research resources
7. Analytical and problem-solving skills
8. Effective use of IT, such as wordprocessing, email, databases, online environments and the use of the internet as a research and study tool
9. Initiative and adaptability

Programme Year 1 BA French and Management Session 2008/09 (Full time study)

	Module title	Mark	Level	Credits	ECTS
FREN 1101	Modern Language I	67	4	20	10
FREN 1110	Intro to French Studies I	69	4	20	10
FREN 1011	Language in Contexts I	74	4	10	5
FREN1012	Language in Contexts II	72	4	10	5
BUEC 1195	Introductory Mathematics for Man. Studies (II)	85	4	20	10
BUEC 1230	Introduction to Accounting and Finance	83	4	20	10
BUEC 1675	Introductory Statistics for Man. Studies (II)	85	4	20	10

Programme Year 2 BA French and Management Session 2009/10 (Full time study)

FREN 2201	Modern French Language IIA	67	5	10	5
FREN 2202	Modern French Language IIB	69	5	10	5
FREN 2238	Intro to French Linguistics	66	5	20	10
FREN 2381	French Drama from the 17th to 19th Century I	67	5	10	5
FREN 2382	The Seventh Art – Cinema in France I	69	5	10	5
BUEC 2850	Marketing	58	5	20	10
BUEC 2855	French for Business	64	5	20	10
BUEC 2901	Human Resources Management	80	5	20	10

Programme Yr 3 BA French and Management Studies Session 2010/11 (Full time study)

At the University of HIJK (see its transcript for further information)		00			
FREN 9001	Year Abroad (A)	P	n/a	60	30
FREN 9004	Year Abroad (B)	P	n/a	60	30

Programme Yr 4 BA French and Management Studies Session 2011/12 (Full time study)

FREN 3010	Advanced Language Skills	67	6	20	10
FREN 3070	Bilingual Liaison Interpreting	76	6	20	10
FREN 3162	French as a Professional Language	76	6	10	5
FREN 3431	Written Varieties of French	76	6	10	5
BUEC 3200	Business Finance 2	82	6	20	10
BUEC 3070	Strategic Management	66	6	20	10
BUEC 3885	Management Decision Making and Information Systems	76	6	10	5

Type	Weight	Mark	Type	Weight	Mark	Type	Weight	Mark
Coursework	1.0	67%						
Coursework	1.0	69%						
Coursework	1.0	74%						
Coursework	1.0	72%						
Exam	1.0	75%						
Exam	1.0	75%						
Exam	1.0	75%	Coursework	0.5	88%			
Coursework	1.0	67%						
Practical	1.0	69%						
Coursework	0.5	70%	Practical	0.5	62%			
Coursework	1.0	67%						
Portfolio	1.0	68%						
Coursework	0.5	52%	Presentation	0.5	64%			
Coursework	0.5	62%	Practical	0.5	62%			
Exam	1.0	80%						
Coursework	0.3	64%	Practical	0.2	73%	Exam	0.5	67%
Coursework	0.5	72%	Presentation	0.5	80%			
Portfolio	1.0	76%						
Exam	1.0	76%						
Exam	1.0	82%						
Coursework	1.0	66%						
Coursework	0.5	67%	Exam	0.5	73%			

4.4 Grading scheme: Marks are out of a possible 100% and the minimum pass mark is 40%. Marks are based on the following university scale: 70 or more First Class; 60-69 Second Class (Upper Division); 50-59 Second Class (Lower Division); 40-49 Third Class; less than 40 Fail.

4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (in original language): First Class with honours.

5 Information on the function of the qualification

5.1 Access to further study: Access to postgraduate study: Bologna FQ-EHEA 2nd cycle degree or diploma.

5.2 Professional status (if applicable): Not applicable

6 Additional information

6.1 Additional information: Outside their academic curriculum, students have the opportunity to engage in other activities that contribute to their own achievement as well as to the life of the institution and the wider community. Those activities verified by the institution, as approved by its Academic Board, are included – where applicable – in this section.

Additional awards (accredited performance in non-academic contexts measured/assessed by, or with external accreditation recognised by, the university)

The British Council Year Abroad Personal Development Portfolio

This comprises:

- a pre-departure checklist and skills audit
 - a personal development plan
 - a log-book/diary
 - a series of structured questionnaires for use at intervals throughout the year
 - an end-of-year summary report and review
-

Assessed by the university, it is a requirement for certification that the university confirms to the British Council that scheme requirements have been met.

The Easthampton Award, based on a programme of transferable skills training and experiential learning. To obtain this university certificate, students must plan, pursue and reflect on an active programme of personal development. They must show evidence of critical reflection on experience, identifying ways in which their formal and informal learning has prepared them for work and life. Assessment takes place in the final year: written assessment is modelled on a graduate application form, and oral assessment takes the form of a ten-minute interview. Assessment involves both academic staff and representative employers and is moderated by the university.

Additional formal role(s) undertaken by student for which no recognition is provided in terms of credit

Mentor: Aim Higher Initiative Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Mentoring Scheme (2009/10). Students carry out short-term placements in schools and colleges to increase the educational achievement and aspirations of BME pupils and other learners. A typical placement will comprise 10 half or whole days in successive weeks over one or two semesters. Students complete a brief personal statement in order to claim achievement as suitable for verification.

University professional and departmental prizes

Awarded the Charles Alexander Aitken Prize (2011) for an essay in English or French, of between 2,000 and 5,000 words, on any subject within the scope of French and Management Studies. The award is for outstanding academic merit at undergraduate level.

6.2 Further information sources:

Additional information may be obtained from the university's website at: <http://www.eastham.ac.uk/students> or by emailing: Exams-Office@eastham.ac.uk

7 Certification of the supplement

7.1 Date:

7.2 Signature:

7.3 Capacity:

7.4 Official stamp or seal:

To check the validity of this document where presented in hard copy format please email: HEARs@eastham.ac.uk

Information on the national higher education system

Description of higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland,⁴¹ higher education institutions are independent, self-governing bodies active in teaching, research and scholarship. They are established by Royal Charter or legislation and most are part-funded by government.

Higher education (HE) is provided by many different types of institution. In addition to universities and university colleges, whose charters and statutes are made through the Privy Council which advises the Queen on the granting of Royal Charters and incorporation of universities, there are a number of publicly-designated and autonomous institutions within the higher education sector. Publicly funded higher education provision is available in some colleges of further education by the authority of another duly empowered institution. Teaching to prepare students for the award of higher education qualifications can be conducted in any higher education institution and in some further education colleges.

Degree awarding powers and the title 'university'

All universities and many higher education colleges have the legal power to develop their own courses and award their own degrees, as well as determine the conditions on which they are awarded. Some HE colleges and specialist institutions without these powers offer programmes, with varying extents of devolved authority, leading to the degrees of an institution which does have them. All universities in existence before 2005 have the power to award degrees on the basis of completion of taught courses and the power to award research degrees. From 2005, institutions in England and Wales that award only taught degrees ('first' and 'second cycle') and which meet certain numerical criteria, may also be permitted to use the title 'university'. Higher education institutions that award only taught degrees but which do not meet the numerical criteria may apply to use the title 'university college', although not all choose to do so. All of these institutions are subject to the same regulatory quality assurance and funding requirements as universities; and all institutions decide for themselves which students to admit and which staff to appoint. Degrees and other higher education qualifications are legally owned by

the awarding institution, not by the state.

The names of institutions with their own degree awarding powers ("Recognised Bodies") are available for download at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/recognised-uk-degrees/recognised-bodies>.

Higher education institutions, further education colleges and other organisations able to offer courses leading to a degree of a Recognised Body are listed by the English, Welsh and Northern Irish authorities, and are known as "Listed Bodies". View the list at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/recognised-uk-degrees/listed-bodies>.

Qualifications

The types of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions at sub-degree and undergraduate (first cycle) and postgraduate level (second and third cycles) are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). This also includes qualification descriptors that were developed with the HE sector by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA - established in 1997 as an independent UK-wide body to monitor the standard of higher education provision - www.qaa.ac.uk). The FHEQ was self-certified as compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, the qualifications framework adopted as part of the Bologna Process, in February 2009. Foundation degrees, designed to create intermediate awards strongly oriented towards specific employment opportunities, were introduced in 2001. In terms of the European Higher Education Area they are "short cycle" qualifications within the first cycle. The FHEQ is one component of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Wales (DCELLS) and the Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment, Northern Ireland (CCEA) have established the Qualifications and Credit Framework (to replace, in time, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)). These authorities regulate a number of professional, statutory and other awarding bodies which control VET and general qualifications at all levels. The QCF is also incorporated into the CQFW. There is a close association between the levels of the FHEQ and the NQF (as shown overleaf), and other frameworks of

⁴¹ The UK has a system of devolved government, including for higher education, to Scotland, to Wales and to Northern Ireland. This description is approved by the High Level Policy Forum which includes representatives of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; the Scottish Government; the Welsh Assembly

Government; the higher education funding councils for England, Scotland and Wales; the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA); Universities UK (UUK); GuildHE and the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (UK NARIC).

the UK and Ireland (see 'Qualifications can cross Boundaries' <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries.aspx>).

Quality Assurance

Academic standards are established and maintained by higher education institutions themselves using an extensive and sophisticated range of shared quality assurance approaches and structures. Standards and quality in institutions are underpinned by the universal use of external examiners, a standard set of indicators and other reports, by the activities of the QAA, and in professional areas by relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. This ensures that institutions meet national expectations described in the FHEQ: subject benchmark statements, the Code of Practice and programme specifications. QAA conducts peer-review based audits and reviews of higher education institutions with the opportunity for subject-based review as the need arises. The accuracy and adequacy of quality-related information published by the higher education institutions is also reviewed. QAA also reviews publicly funded higher education provision in further education colleges.

Credit Systems

Most higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland belong to one of several credit consortia and some operate local credit accumulation and transfer systems for students moving between programmes and/or institutions. A framework of national guidelines, the Higher Education Credit Framework for England, was launched in 2008. Credit is also an integral part of the CQFW and the QCF. It may be possible for credit awarded in one framework to be recognised by education providers whose qualifications sit within a different framework. HE credit systems in use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for accumulation and transfers within the European Higher Education Area, and are used to recognise learning gained by students in institutions elsewhere in Europe.

Admission

The most common qualification for entry to higher education is the General Certificate of Education at 'Advanced' (A) level. Other appropriate NQF level 3 qualifications and the kite-marked Access to HE Diploma may also provide entry to HE. Level 3 qualifications in the CQFW, including the Welsh Baccalaureate, also provide entry, as do Scottish Highers, Advanced Highers or qualifications at the same levels of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Part-time and mature students may enter HE with these qualifications or alternatives with evidenced equivalent prior formal and/or experiential learning. Institutions will admit students whom they believe to have the potential to complete their programmes successfully.

Diagram of higher education qualification levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) ⁵		FQ EHEA cycle	Credit	
Typical Qualifications	Level		Typical UK	Typical ECTS credit ranges ³
Doctoral degrees (eg PhD, DPhil, EdD)	8	3rd cycle	Typically not credit rated ¹	Typically not credit rated
Masters Degrees Integrated Masters Degrees Postgraduate Diplomas Postgraduate Certificate of Education Postgraduate Certificates	7	2nd cycle	180	60-120 ²
Bachelors Degrees with Honours Bachelors Degrees Professional Graduate Certificate in Education Graduate Diplomas Graduate Certificates	6	1st cycle	360	180-240
Foundation Degrees Diplomas of Higher Education Higher National Diplomas	5	Short cycle	240	120
Higher National Certificates Certificates of Higher Education	4		120	
Entry to HE via equivalent experiential or prior learning				

¹ PhD and DPhil qualifications are typically not credit-rated. Newer doctoral degrees, such as Professional Doctorate, are sometimes credit rated, typically 540 UK credits.

² A range of 90-120 ECTS is typical of most awards.

³ 1 ECTS credit is typically worth 2 UK credits.

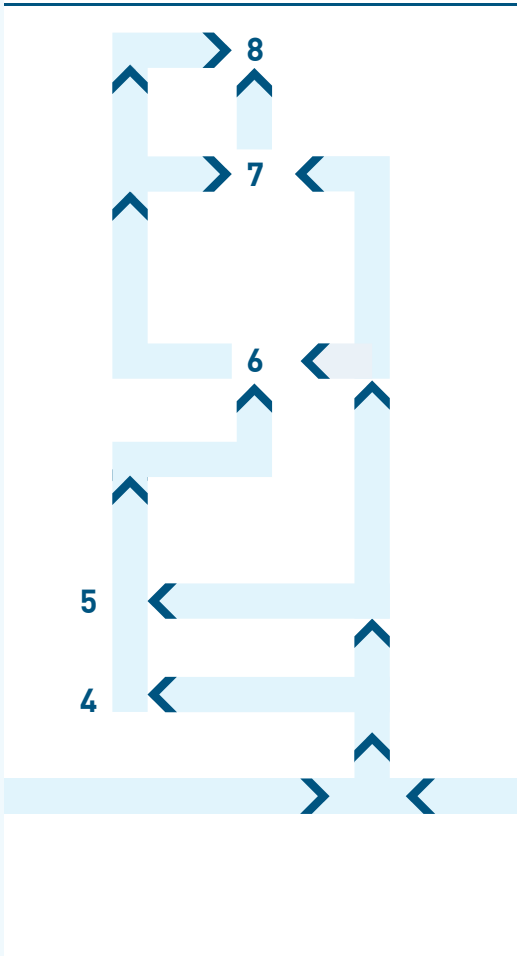
⁴ The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW).

⁵ For students with the necessary prerequisites, entry to each FHEQ level is possible from the next lower level in the NQF or Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

⁶ These levels will also apply to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The QCF will eventually replace the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Progression for selection of students
(FHEQ levels)

National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland⁶



Typical Qualifications	Level
Vocational Qualifications Level 8	8
Fellowships NVQ Level 5 Vocational Qualifications Level 5	7
Vocational Qualifications Level 6	6
NVQ Level 4 Higher National Diplomas (HND) Higher National Certificates (HNC) Vocational Qualifications Level 5	5
Vocational Qualifications Level 4	4
National Vocational Qualification Level 3 Vocational Qualifications Level 3 GCE AS and A-level Advanced Diploma Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced ⁴	3

Levels 2, 1
and entry

ANNEXE G

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This report also draws upon the extensive sources from the work undertaken to develop the recommendations that the BISG was established to implement, outlined in:

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NOTES

NOTES





Universities UK

This publication has been produced by Universities UK, the representative organisation for the UK's universities. Founded in 1918, its mission is to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector. With 134 members and offices in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh, it promotes the strength and success of UK universities nationally and internationally.

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